

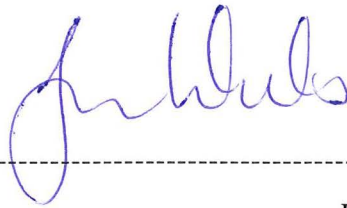
*Museums, communities and
participatory projects*

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DECLARATION

This thesis comprises my own work, and due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used. The thesis is 116,000 words in length, exclusive of the bibliography and appendices and footnotes.



Joanna Wills
6 August 2007

STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY OF ACCESS

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ABSTRACT

Museums have been working with communities of place, practice and interest for many years to preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage, develop research collections and create exhibitions or events. However, in an environment of increased social and economic accountability, many cultural institutions are now re-examining the relevance of their activities and are reflecting on the ways in which they include communities in their programs. This thesis considers the correlation between participatory theory and principles and the methods Australian museums use to work with and engage communities. In particular, it seeks to explore why museum outreach activities, as the dominant medium for extended community engagement initiatives within museums, have not engaged more fully with interdisciplinary participatory models, particularly those utilised by natural resource management (NRM) practitioners.

The thesis explores the difference between the concept of engagement and the concept of participation and uses a case study approach to reflect on how these are practiced and understood in the museum milieu. Using outreach projects with a socio-environmental and NRM focus, I suggest that the integration of participatory principles and practices has the potential to increase the capacity of museums and communities to actively contribute to a range of contemporary social issues and debates. Implicit in this research is an understanding that consultation gives rise to, but is not equivalent to, participation; that participatory approaches and relationship building are at once time consuming and yet can be expedient; and that while not applicable to every museum project, participatory approaches can inspire interaction, empowerment and creativity in worlds including and beyond museums.

By exploring these dimensions in relation to interdisciplinary approaches, and using the examples and case studies explored throughout the thesis, this dissertation provides museum practitioners with a spectrum/methodology to help advocate for and/or integrate community engagement strategies into project development.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Terms are used in full and followed immediately by the bracketed abbreviation the first time they appear in each chapter – eg: National Museum of Australia (NMA).

AM	Australian Museum
AAM	American Association of Museums
AHU	Aboriginal Heritage Unit
ARC	Australian Research Council
CCA	Collections Council of Australia
CCD	Community cultural development
CMAG	Canberra Museum and Art Gallery
EIANZ	Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand
HCC	Heritage Collections Council
HCWG	Heritage Collections Working Group
ICCROM	International Centre for Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICT	Information and communications technology
ICOM	International Council of Museums
MLMW	Melbourne's Living Museum of the West
MA	Museums Australia
MAGNT	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
MDBC	Murray-Darling Basin Commission
MDO	Museum Development Officer
MRCN	Museum Resource Centre Network
MV	Museum Victoria
NMA	National Museum of Australia
NPWHF	National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame
NRM	Natural resource management
PHM	Powerhouse Museum
QM	Queensland Museum
RADO	Regional Arts Development Officer
SAM	South Australian Museum
TIAR	Tasmanian Institute for Agricultural Research
TMAG	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
UTAS	University of Tasmania
WAM	Western Australian Museum
WOFG	Women on Farms Gathering
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation

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I am grateful for the contributions, knowledge and support that a vast network of personal friends and colleagues have provided during my candidature. The former know who they are, but I would particularly like to mention Pat Gregory, for literally living through most of the thesis with me, Cat Williams for devising sanity-saving entertainment, and Derek Ritzmann, who has been my confidant for nearly 20 years. Without their friendship I would be lost. The latter includes individuals in the museum industry, particularly Liza Dale-Hallett, Margaret Birtley and Ian Coates. It also includes colleagues from the university community, such as Damien Lucas and members of the University of Tasmania's Rural Social Research Network, Professor Kate Darian-Smith from the University of Melbourne, and Jonathan Sweet from Deakin University.

I have been fortunate to have two supervisors who share a common interest in participation and engagement. Professor Frank Vanclay has been steadfast in his guidance. I admire his methodological expertise, ethics and professionalism greatly, and have learnt a great deal from his guidance. Dr Ruth Lane has provided balanced and critical feedback with a lightness of touch that has helped to make this journey achievable and enjoyable. Both have been patient and have accommodated and respected my needs as both a student and individual. For this I am enormously grateful.

This thesis, with its interest in people, principles and participation, directly reflects my family and upbringing. I aspire to my sister Sara's intelligence and finesse in her own work with communities, and am indebted to my mum Pat for her constant encouragement throughout good times and bad. I admire my partner, Mike's boundless energy, sense of fair play, and am deeply grateful for his love, encouragement and compassion. My father Tony shared with me his love of history, nature and music, and a mischievous sense of humour. I hope to refine and develop my liaison skills, as he did throughout his career, and dedicate this work to his memory.

PREFACE

In July 2001, Dawn Casey, then Director of the National Museum of Australia (NMA), introduced a new Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project in a keynote address delivered to The Humanities and Social Sciences Summit (2001).¹ This collaborative research project between the NMA, Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) and Charles Sturt University (subsequently, the University of Tasmania (UTAS)) planned to address a number of essential questions:

- How can community participation in natural and cultural resource initiatives be activated and maintained?
- How can such participation be made meaningful to the participants themselves?
- How can the diversity of the communities within the Murray-Darling Basin be recognised, valued and reflected in such participation?
- How can participation be promoted amongst those sections of the community who have typically been excluded or alienated by conventional participation and communication processes?
- How can the power imbalances and the limitations of articulation and social skills be overcome? (Casey, 2001:21-22).

Crucial to this research, Casey (2001: 22) argued, would be a recognition that “the goal of activating communities and individuals to support natural resource management involves an engagement with local cultural heritage.” This focus on community, cultural heritage and participation matched both my interests and work experience. The project’s associated PhD scholarship provided a tangible opportunity to address a range of questions I had been stockpiling over eight years of professional heritage and museum practice.

Developing an interest in participatory practices

Before beginning this research, I had been worked on an eclectic range of community-based projects for Australian state museums and libraries, as well as projects for my own freelance curatorial and research business. In this latter role, I worked for small regional museums, historical societies and universities, and

¹ These comments were gleaned from the original Australian Research Council Linkage Grant Application prepared by Professor Frank Vanclay and Dr Ruth Lane in 2002. This successful application, which was collaboration between the MDBC the NMA and the University of Tasmania, became the *Committing to Place* Project.

contributed to projects that addressed environmental and social sustainability issues. Nearly all of these projects have included community consultation and fieldwork, however, three have particularly influenced my interest in participatory practices.

In 1995-1996 I worked as an historian with archaeologist, Dr Jim Rhoads, at Heritage Victoria to create anticipatory lists of cultural heritage sites. Was it possible, we hypothesised, to anticipate tangible and intangible heritage attributes and values of places rather than just respond when development threatened an area or site?. Historical research, environmental history and the creation of historic themes were crucial components of the research methodology. Equally important, Dr Rhoads argued, was the role communities could play in contributing to the agency's regional knowledge. He encouraged me to liaise with professionals and communities to develop a holistic understanding of the study area. This project can be seen as a precursor to the types of participatory GIS projects that are now being undertaken by community development practitioners and state heritage agencies, and it is ironic that I am now (in 2007) employed on a project that is underpinned by an engagement philosophy.²

The second influential experience materialised during 1997 when I worked in a team³ at Museum Victoria to develop a travelling exhibition about sustainable agriculture called *Future Harvest: a journey towards a sustainable future*.⁴ Neither natural science nor pure history, this exhibition required developers to be flexible, creative, communicative and to have a sense of humour. As a Field Curator, I developed case study exhibitions with nine farmers from regional Victoria. Face-to-face engagement, making videos and recording oral histories were key components of the job; each site visit was a steep yet rewarding learning curve. In effect, I became a participant myself – foraging for insects and worms under fallen trees, standing knee deep in dairy waste during milking time, birthing lambs and perching on the back of a working tractor to conduct an interview. In

² *Rediscovering Queensland: Places in the Far North*, is part of a state-wide survey project by the Cultural Heritage Branch of the Environmental Protection Agency in Queensland, Australia, to work with communities to identify places of state significance. Project planning involved engaging consultants to devise an approach to community engagement (Godden Mackay Logan, 2005).

³ The *Future Harvest* team comprised Rebecca Jones and myself as field curators, Darren Peacock as project manager and Liza Dale-Hallett, Senior Curator at Museum Victoria.

⁴ *Future Harvest* is discussed as a minor case study in Chapter 5.

the process I found learning by doing was personally transformative and underpinned the techniques used to communicate abstract issues to exhibition audiences. Being there, spending time, getting involved: it was a way of getting to know the people that were the subject of this exhibition. This process also highlighted the importance of case study participants and their experiences of the project. I have since considered the learning experiences of the participant farmers and regretted not having the opportunity to follow up and evaluate the process in more detail. As a result, the way museums manage and maintain connections with people to enhance the relevance and impact of their involvement is an important issue within this thesis.

The final project that has influenced my work practices reflects evaluation issues, albeit it in a more negative context. In preparation for Australia's Centenary of Federation, a range of national cultural institutions united to develop a collaborative a travelling exhibition called *Belonging* to showcase their collections.⁵ As Community Consultation Curator I ran sessions with 14 different communities across Australia to gather contemporary stories for the exhibition. This task was achieved, with varying degrees of success. However, I am sceptical about the impact these sessions had at both a community level and in relation to the exhibition itself. Tight schedules, deadlines and institutional necessities meant there was insufficient lead time to develop ongoing contact with communities for genuine engagement. The rapid acquisition of stories and material during fieldwork was more like collecting than engaging. Further, the complexity of the topic meant that more time was needed to liaise with those people sharing their memories and thoughts. To draw out people's stories and memories can, at times, have negative impacts and the ramifications of this need to be integrated into engagement strategies.

These reflections reveal my own inexperience and an inability to understand the degrees of participation in different contexts. At the same time, however, they highlight a critical gap in professional learning. During my post graduate training there was no formal arena in which to learn how to develop and deliver appropriate cultural engagement activities. This remains a gap in museum

⁵These institutions included the: State Library of Victoria, the State Library of New South Wales, the National Library of Australia, and the National Archives of Australia.

learning – many a curator is required to undertake engagement work without a detailed understanding of the processes required.⁶ These experiences, along with a myriad of others, have combined to prick my conscience and curiosity about appropriate engagement and participation methodologies. They have therefore been the starting point from which this research's rationale has developed.

Undertaking a PhD: pleasure, pitfalls and progress

Like many other PhD candidates, this research has been a mixture of discovery, apprehension, excitement and opportunity. I was fortunate to have been part of an interdisciplinary team and to work with professionals in government agencies. This provided me with funding, challenges and encounters not possible in traditional research projects. I undertook substantial fieldwork in regional areas of the Murray-Darling Basin and many of my fellow travellers and hosts have also become respected colleagues and friends.

I also had the opportunity to develop skills via conferences, workshops and symposiums. Co-presenting at a conference with a project participant was a particular highlight, as was attending the *International Conference on Engaging Communities* in Brisbane with a range of inspirational speakers and other delegates. In 2005, I participated in the UNESCO-run Asian Academy of Heritage Management field school in Hanoi, Vietnam, with other scholars from the Asia-Pacific region. On the basis of my research interests and experience, I was also asked to help run a field school in remote northern Laos in 2006 where I taught local museologists and Australian students about cultural heritage and museum-based participatory practices. Although a slight deviation from the PhD itself, these two trips presented personally transformative opportunities to use this research in an applied cross-cultural context, and learn from international colleagues.⁷

⁶ An exception to this has emerged as I finalise this thesis with The School of English, Media Studies and Art History at The University of Queensland, Australia presenting "Museums and Community Engagement Professional Development Program" which is a master class for about 10 professionals to participate in symposium in Brisbane 17 - 21 July 2007.

⁷ I benefited enormously from both experiences, and have reflected on the nature of participatory cultural heritage programs in socialist settings – an interesting deviation from the participatory democracy discussed in this thesis.

Like every PhD, this research has also been fraught with struggles and complications – some minor and some major. Working within a project team meant spending considerable time on project work opposed to thesis work and delayed writing. Face-to-face meetings were always engaging and productive, however, as team members were located in Hobart, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, most communication took place via teleconferences. These make a variety of lifestyles and interactions possible, yet they are not always conducive to building interpersonal relationships. Competing timelines and setbacks at an institutional level also delayed fieldwork. Working with communities can also be challenging from a temporal perspective, particularly when participants are frustrated or facing dilemmas of their own.

Several disasters struck at the end of 2003 when my laptop, research diary and notes were stolen from my car; in mid 2005 when my computer experienced major failure and required rebuilding; and in early 2006 and 2007 when I fell ill. Most significantly, however, my father, Tony, died on 7 March 2003 after a prolonged battle with cancer. The months prior to his death were particularly difficult and stressful due to the debilitating nature of his illness and regular hospitalisation. Grief does not work to timetables, nor, I have found, does it subside with the passing of time. There have been periods when I have struggled to retain the enthusiasm, intensity, consistency and resolve required for this level of academic endeavour, and when I have needed to recuperate. This has undoubtedly impacted on the thesis submission date.

I am encouraged, however, by what I have gained during this research process. I remain committed to the pursuit of engagement in the museum and heritage field: my interest in the topic has not waned, nor has my enthusiasm for its application in the museum and heritage industries. Some of my early, and perhaps more naïve assumptions have altered, and I am now better equipped to address and rationally consider the participatory dimensions of project development and community engagement. The applied heritage experience in Vietnam and Laos were tangible examples of how much students can gain from studying at this level. My task now, I hope, is to apply what I have learnt and help develop and improve practices

within the heritage and museum industry. I hope that the list of publications deriving from this work go some way to inspiring and influencing others.

Publications arising from the research associated with this thesis:

i. Journal articles

- Lane, R., Vanclay, F., Wills, J. & Lucas, D. 2007. Museum Outreach Programs to Promote Community Engagement in Local Environmental Issues. *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 66(2):158-173.
- Lane, R., Lucas, D., Vanclay, F., Henry, S., Wills, J. & Coates, I. (2005) 'Committing to Place' at the Local Scale: The potential of youth education programs for promoting community participation in regional natural resource management, *Australian Geographer* 36(3): 351-369.
- Lane, R., Wills, J., Vanclay, F., Lucas, D. & Coates, I. (submitted) "Vernacular heritage and evolving environmental policy in Australia", submitted to *Geoforum*
- Vanclay, F., Lane, R., Wills, J., Coates, I. & Lucas, D. (2004) 'Committing to Place' and evaluating the higher purpose: Increasing engagement in natural resource management through museum outreach and educational activities, *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management* 6(4): 539-564.

ii. Published Conference Papers

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PART 1: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO

A participatory parable: Making cups of tea

Imagine I have been asked by my supervisor to approach a group of project participants (currently unknown to each other) in the foyer of our museum and find out who would like me to make them a cup of tea. The group has a break at a certain time and she indicates she will visit the group at some stage during that period [point 1: a project has been suggested, participants identified and a monitoring process has started].

First, I find out which varieties of tea are in the kitchen and discover some coffee [point 2: an intervention has been designed and modified after preliminary research]. I enter the room, introduce myself and ask who would like a drink. Seven people accept the offer, two say they would prefer coffee if available, and one does not want anything [point 3: I have engaged the group and outlined the activity]. I then describe the varieties of tea available and ask those who have requested tea what kind they would like [point 4: I have outlined the boundaries and limitation of the activity and requested interaction]. One asks for black tea, three request white tea with one sugar, two ask for peppermint tea and the other two would prefer water as there is no green tea available. I then ask the coffee drinkers how they have their coffee and they respond [point 5: I have consulted the group to understand their needs and they have responded].

As I leave the room to go and prepare the drinks, one of the coffee drinkers offers to make the coffee because they like it made a particular way. I accept as this means I can 'design' peoples' drinks according to their taste as well as integrating them into the project at hand [point 6: consultation has given rise to a level of participation]. We then make the tea, coffee and get the water. I include a glass of water for the person who wanted nothing in case they change their mind. We take the refreshments back to the group and they drink them [point 7: participation in the activity occurs]. One only drinks half their tea, saying it is too strong. The person who wanted nothing says the aroma of coffee is enticing and requests a cup. Two people ask for biscuits to accompany their tea, while another asks if they can go and make another cup of tea [point 8: evaluation and refinement of the process occurs, ongoing participation in the activity occurs, and time to consider the benefits of participation lead to further or different types of participation].

My supervisor appears to ensure I have given tea to those who want it, and observes the refinements and execution. She makes a note to follow the same approach for the next project planning meeting [point 9: I am checked and made accountable, and the process is integrated into the museums' approach to community engagement projects].

Chapter 1

*The nexus of engagement:
museums, communities and participatory paradigms*

1.1 Introduction: museums, communities and participation

This research thesis considers the parameters, practices and potential of participatory projects between museums and communities in relation to discourse and theories about participation. It seeks to explore why museum outreach activities, as the dominant medium for extended community engagement initiatives within the museum milieu, have not engaged more fully with existing models for participatory practices. It reflects on the interdisciplinary nature of the concept of participation in relation to museum practices and projects, particularly museum outreach. It considers the dimension of the terms community in relation to museums and reflects on how museums access and engage these communities to develop cooperative projects. It suggests there needs to be a distinction between the notion of community and/or public in relation to those that receive programs as visitors, and those who participate and contribute to the development of museum material. It seeks to position museums as more active agencies and sites for the conduct and delivery of programs that offer genuine participatory experiences (as well as those that acknowledge the dimensions of the participatory ideal in relation to community engagement), and which thus contribute to understanding the cultural dimensions of social change. Finally, the thesis suggests that museums would benefit from more reflective practices in their pursuit of community engagement initiatives by turning their evaluative gaze inwards as they consider the potential and impact of community-based participatory projects.

1.1.1 Participatory museum projects: process or outcome?

Classical and contemporary participatory theorists (Rousseau, 1968; Mill, 1910, 1963; Cole, 1920a, 1920b; Pateman, 1970; Wenger, 1998) have discussed the benefits of participatory practices in the context of education and identity development. These benefits are envisaged because of their transformational capacity. For museums, how these 'benefits' are delivered thus becomes an essential consideration. Are they ideals to strive for as a project unfolds and assess once it has ended, or are these transformational elements embedded into the process of project development itself (that is, located in the context of 'learning in doing'). The notion of change and development for personal growth is embodied within the participatory ideal. The concepts of education and identity are crucial to the discussion of participatory project development precisely because they have the capacity to be both process and outcome.

Many museums embrace opportunities to develop community-based projects. For institutions such projects offer the chance to broaden organisational appeal and audiences, extend collections-based knowledge and capacity, and create new interpretive opportunities and experiences. A focus on outcomes as opposed to processes, however, frequently diminishes the real potential that such community projects promise. To some extent, this is understandable, particularly in a climate in which social and financial accountability is scrutinized. Many museums, for example, are assessed on their ability to meet goals, objectives and targets identified in strategic plans that use economic and management criteria for measuring success (Scott, 2002). Further, one needs to consider the communication skills set of individual curators and museums workers. At what point, for example, are curators encouraged to develop their collaborative or engagement abilities, and what does this mean and entail? What are the ramifications of this type of practice, especially for those who are not necessarily well disposed towards or capable of working in a collaborative capacity (Schaffer-Bacon, 2002; Hirzy, 2002; Igoe, 2002)?

The challenge and dilemma for museums to be financially viable and socially relevant has been discussed at length in much of the recent literature in the museum studies field (Archibald, 2004; Black, 2005; Hein, 2000; Hirzy, 2002; Weil, 2002). Despite this managerial context, however, the focus on outcomes weakens the ideal of participatory and collaborative community engagement projects being developed as a joint or cooperative venture. If 'in participatory theory 'participation' refers to (equal) participation in the making of decisions' (Pateman, 1970: 43), the focus on outcomes clearly undermines the purpose and practice of running participatory projects. Further, it brings into question the notion of intellectual exchange and benefits that institutions desire from such projects. If an institution has predefined or designed a project, for example, one must ask what type of collaborative experience is available for the partner organisation or participant community. What type of learning exchange does the institution hope to achieve by running this type of project? Rather than transcend boundaries between institutions and communities, there is a danger that projects that purport to be, but do not genuinely cater for, participatory experiences merely reinforce hierarchical relationships.

Arguing for the need to implement, integrate and value the transformative dimensions of participatory projects is problematic when one considers the issue of long term institutional viability. Nonetheless, this dissertation suggests that the benefits of participatory museum projects might be more than just tangible. It hypothesises that they can add value, depth and relevance to museum projects, and contribute substantially to museums' viability. These benefits should be considered in relation into four broad categories:

1. Valuing people, individuals or groups, that contribute their stories and participate in the production of museum products
2. Valuing that which is learnt via the project process, including the way the project is devised, developed, negotiated, managed, delivered and so forth.
3. Valuing the applied learning within the project, that which is designed to be developmental and transformational for participant individuals, communities or institutions beyond the life of the project itself.
4. Valuing the information and research material gathered in the course of the project, and its ability to extend institutional knowledge and learning. That is, valuing the tangible and intangible material culture that such projects produce.

Promoting the different dimensions and benefits of these projects may serve to increase their acceptability as a research and project method. These values, as such, form the basis for the major research aims and objectives (see Section 1.4).

1.1.2 'Making cups of tea': participatory utopia or valuing community engagement?

This basic division, and the need to value the process of project development, is illustrated in the *Making cups of tea* parable that appears in the scenario box just prior to this introductory chapter. Undoubtedly, the parable is a form of participatory utopia. Even participatory theorists question the viability of the ideals they advocate. Arnstein's (1969) seminal publication 'Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation', for example, outlined clear arguments against participation and community control and acknowledged the limitations of her model. Further, many scholars have reflected on the difficulties of defining the concept of participation. Indeed Pateman (1970: 44) mused:

There is the problem of the definition of 'participation'; clearly where direct participation is possible then the definition is relevant but it is not clear, even though the individual would have more opportunities for political participation in a participatory society, how far the paradigm of direct participation can be replicated under conditions where representation is going to be widely necessary.

This representative context is clearly applicable to the work carried out in many museums, particularly national museums. But for projects that are devised with a participatory and collaborative ideal in mind, adhering to participatory practices is both desirable and viable. In its simplicity, therefore, the making cups of tea parable highlights the importance of participation via consultation and engagement, project design and delivery and evaluation and review. It illustrates the possibilities and potential benefits that can emerge when an appreciation of different needs and different engagement stages and techniques are integrated into project planning. It values transparent processes and dialogue as crucial engagement tools. These ideals are informed by theories of social capital, civic engagement and deliberative dialogue. These theories highlight principles of action, collaboration, inclusion, networking, participation, reciprocity and trustworthiness as integral to the practice and process of participatory projects (American Association of Museums, 2002a, 2002b; Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Fukuyama, 1999; Dryzek, 2002; Putnam, 2000, Yankelovich, 1999).

Community participation in process is both valid and important, particularly if an institution wants to develop collaborative projects that are considered genuinely collaborative, relevant and worthwhile by both institutional peers and the community alike. What would have happened in the parable, for example, if I had taken a pot of tea and ten cups into the room and left it on a table for the people to help themselves? Only four people would have had a drink that they wanted. A couple may have had some tea but not liked it and made a note not to drink it again, while others would have just gone without. I could have waited for the group to ask for something and taken their silence to mean they needed nothing, not knowing that perhaps as they didn't know each other, it was unlikely that they would make a group approach. Alternatively I could reflect on what might have happened if individuals had approached me to ask for a drink. I might have shown them where they could make tea (but not coffee), where they could go and buy some or shown them nothing at all. One could also speculate whether the knowledge that my supervisor was going to check up on the group was an impetus for increased consideration of their needs. If I knew I wasn't going to be checked by my supervisor, would I have been so accommodating in the original scenario?

This thesis, thus, reflects on the principles outlined in the points embedded in the 'making cups of tea' parable, and examines them in relation to the participatory dimensions required to develop meaningful collaborative projects in museums.

1.2 The potential for community engagement and participation in museums

Understanding the principles and potential of participation may enhance and improve the way a variety of institutions, including museums, integrate community perspectives and participation into their activities. This integration may also assist museums as they struggle to identify their ongoing relevance in contemporary society (Emery, 2001; Schaffer Bacon, 2002; Watkins, 1994; Weil, 2002). By valuing participatory and collaborative processes as integral to project development, museums can reflect on the transformational capacity of their activities. Projects that take account of community perspectives and /or participation have the potential to generate ongoing interest in contemporary social issues, such as natural resource management and environmental sustainability, via a form of active citizenship (Newman, 2005). Further, the way museums approach participatory and collaborative community projects has the potential to contribute to both social and institutional development. For museums, as noted above, this proposition is compatible with much of the recent literature that focuses on the need to remodel and recast museums' role in society (Archibald, 2002, 2004; Bennett, 1988; Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Vergo, 1989; Weil, 1999, 2000; Witcomb, 2003).

1.2.1 Museums in the service of society

Detailed discussion and analysis of museums' role has been carried out by international museum scholars, and in an international context. The peak body for museums, the International Council of Museums (hereafter ICOM), has continually reviewed its definition of a museum in line with changing disciplinary and theoretical directions (Boylan, 2002). Article 2, Clause 1 of the ICOM statutes (ICOM, 2001: website) states:

A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.

The notion of museums being 'in the service of society and its development' has been a focus within the ICOM definition since 1974. This phrase suggests that the museum profession has had the potential to use its collecting activities in both a representational and transformational capacity. In general terms, museum collections aim to document

and preserve material culture that illustrates significant social, scientific, cultural and environmental change, perspectives and/or experiences (Heritage Collections Council, 2000a, 2000b; Pearce, 1994). These collections are then used to disseminate information via the 'systematic arrangement of objects' for the benefit of those visiting museums and partaking of the programs (Schulz, 1990). Although museum activities have expanded from a collecting, educating and exhibiting paradigm to include public programs and outreach activities, and the notion of cultural heritage has been expanded to include intangible heritage such as oral histories, memory, dancing and language, the currency of museums is still aligned inherently to the objects in their collections.

One can also argue that being 'in the service of its society and development' carries an implicit sense of reciprocity, one in which relationships and dialogue becomes an integral component of museum work. In this scenario, museums actively learn from and engage with the individuals, communities and societies that they actively seek to inform and support. Until the end of the twentieth century however, this reciprocity has been overridden by public perception of museums as *providers and generators* of information (Weil, 1995a). This perception has been reinforced by the language used to describe museums, from Abbé Henri Gregoire's 1792 designation of museums as 'temples of the human spirit', to 'treasure troves' and 'cabinets of curiosities' and cultural warehouses. During the 1970s, Cameron (1971) developed a vision for museums to be 'like the forums of ancient Rome, [and] serve as places of confrontation, interchange, and debate' (Weil, 1995a: 9). This idea challenged museums' venerated identity but still contributed to a sense of them and us between museums and their publics.

In the process of reviewing institutional social relevance, museums have been actively seeking to develop more inclusive and collaborative programs into their practice and thus reduce perceptions of institutions creating 'them and us' barriers (Archibald, 2004; Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Hein, 2000; Hirzy, 2002; Sandell, 2002; Selwood, 2004). New museologists, inspired by the work of the French museologists (Jean Claude Duclos, Hugues de Varine, René Rivard and George Henri Rivière) that emerged in the late 1960s/1970s, shifted the focus of museum activities from objects to people and relationships (Hauenschild, 1988; Vergo, 1989). Their advocacy for the notion of the ecomuseum, a type of museum that focussed museum activities in relation to a

collective paradigm and embedded it into the social, educational, environmental and cultural fabric of a community and a sense of place, attempted to further break down those barriers and advocate a democratic notion of museums working in the service of society (Davis, 1999). In 2002, the American Association of Museums (AAM) furthered the debate surrounding museums and their democratic and civics agenda. Participants in the AAM Museums and Communities Initiative argued that their professional association was challenging museums:

to stretch ... [their] boundaries, step away from the sidelines, come to the centre of civic life, and become ... more active participant[s] and even ... leader[s] in social-capital and community buildings processes (Jackson, 2002: 29).

1.2.2 Valuing community engagement and collaboration

Many institutions illustrate a growing appreciation of the disparate and diverse individuals and communities that make up the museum constituency. Programs that integrate these understandings are usually developed in consideration of a number of crucial variables that dictate the style and process used to undertake the work. The application of a museum-based framework for valuing community contributions, liaison and participatory practices, however, means museums are potentially alienating avenues and interested parties that will help keep them sustainable and viable in a cultural arena that is constantly evolving.

Although Marginson (1993) adapted Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation to develop a model of access and participation for the museum sector, it confined the participatory dimensions of museum work to exhibition development, collection development and policy process. Some authors, such as de Varine (in Hauenschild, 1988) suggest that in the quest to define and maintain reciprocal relationships, museums must move their spotlight away from the collection onto the public. Refocusing in this manner requires greater consideration of the needs of those who use and engage with museums and the ways in which the museum itself is used by communities and society in general. Thus, an understanding of the purpose/mission of the institution, its aims and objectives and its constituent communities becomes a crucial component of repositioning and developing the museum's activities.

The possibilities for participatory projects are multifaceted – for both museums and the participant communities. They rely, however, on an understanding that while the

dimension of participatory projects is ever shifting, the core activity of relationship building remains crucial. Indeed, within this seemingly chaotic dimension, a number of consistent tensions exist that, if understood and seen in a positive light, could give rise to communities that are more engaged with museums and their work, and conversely, museums that are more connected to their communities.

These consistent tensions can be best understood in the shape of a typology which highlights: types of institution/museum; types of community; and types of program, and which are reliant upon an understanding of the appropriate time to use particular types of engagement. Institutional type governs community engagement practices and participation in museums (Stapleton, 2004). A national institution, such as the National Museum of Australia (hereafter NMA), focuses on engagement that is substantially different from local community and regional museums such as the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga Wagga (New South Wales), or Brambruk Living Cultural Centre in Halls Gap (Victoria), which often draw on place-based communities to produce geographically defined identities and programs. For the NMA to be representative, definitions of community are aligned with the thematic representation of national identity and narratives, and case studies from around the country are used to illustrate these issues. Thematic institutions, such as the Immigration Museum (Melbourne) or the Migrant Heritage Centre (Sydney), which draw on community stories and histories engage with different types of communities than science and natural history museums and centres, such as Scienceworks (Melbourne) and the Australian Museum (Sydney), and which engage with research communities to enhance their collections and programs.

Community 'type' also shapes the engagement technique used. The phenomena of community dimensions have been broken down by scholars into communities of place, practice and interest (Kelly & Gordon, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Wenger, 1998). In Australia, for example, this has been explored in more detail in relation to Indigenous communities and the repatriation of cultural material with the development and subsequent review of the *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* policy (Griffin, 1996; Kelly et al., 2001). In 1998, a Museums Australia (Queensland) publication addressed cultural dimensions and protocols for working with Indigenous communities. The Australian Museums' First Australians Gallery, the Gallery of First Australians at the National Museum of Australia and the Bunjilaka Gallery at Melbourne Museum are two

programs that have benefited by this integration of policy with social theory and cultural awareness (Australian Museum website, 2005; Museum Victoria website, 2005; NMA website:2005).

The type of program being undertaken is also a crucial part of project development and planning. Increased understanding and research in the field of audience research and learning has contributed substantially to the development of museum activities (Falk & Dierking, 1992, 1995, 2000; Kelly, 2004). Collaborative exhibitions have been one of the primary vehicles for museums to develop community engagement projects, although there is a distinction between the collaborative experienced offered by larger institutions for exhibitions developed for display within the museum itself and those that are travelling or community-based. Engagement in collecting is also seen as desirable, however assessing the significance of materials is still very much the domain of the curator. Outreach activities, seek to involve diverse publics outside the physical realm of the museum and often outside the typical visitor profile, and can take a myriad of forms, including collecting activities, reminiscence workshops, conservation workshops, exhibitions and other public programs. An appreciation of the appropriate program for integrating participatory activities is, while seemingly evident, crucial in terms of generating genuine community engagement. Timelines, budget, staff availability – all aspects of project management and planning – need consideration from both an institutional and community perspective. Australian museum practitioner, Roslyn Russell reflected:

You can open a Pandora's Box in terms of setting agenda's. If you allow participation, in a very democratic way, of course, all your cherished views and plans could go out the window. Maybe that should happen, I'm not saying it shouldn't, I'm just saying that when you talk about time being factored into doing things if people want genuine participation then they have to give you a lot more time (Russell, R, 03.03.2005: PhD Interview #5).¹

Amidst the preparation and delivery of a variety of museum-community engagement projects, an awareness of success or failure relative to the stakeholders involved in the project is required. Evaluation has emerged as a powerful tool in the museum sector (Borun et al., 1999; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein & Alexander, 1998; Kelly, 2004; Scott, 2002; Sheppard, 2000), particularly with regards to the development of in-house projects. Its application to participant experiences of community engagement projects, however, has been somewhat limited.

¹ See Appendix A for the list of interviews with Australian museum workers recorded for this thesis.

Consideration of these three variables – museum type, community type and program type – combined with an understanding of the differences in engagement techniques are integral to the development of improved participatory practices within museums. An appreciation of these dimensions means museums developing participatory community projects could revolutionise the process and impact of collaborative projects.

1.3 The problem of community engagement and participation in museums

Museums are embedded in the notion of community: their collections, stories, visitors and exhibitions derive, in some way, from the different types of communities they represent and engage. It seems, however, that many museums and professionals problematise the notion of community engagement in a manner that is at times reminiscent of Said's (1978) postcolonial concept of 'the other' in his influential publication *Orientalism*. In the process of 'making' museum products, many museum workers distance themselves from those groups that contribute their stories, collections and knowledge to our tangible and intangible heritage collections. Thus while the ideal of working with a community and the outcome is seen as positive, the process, too often, is not. It is at this point that the concept of community, previously lauded as diverse, exciting and engaged, can become homogenised. Time consuming, difficult, sensitive, hysterical, unpredictable, uniformed, unrepresentative – these are just some of the negative responses that emerge when one discusses the notion of consultation and community engagement in the context of museum, and indeed many other forms of, work. At a time when a number of museums are responding to the issues of institutional and social sustainability, however, the need for clarity of purpose regarding community engagement resonates with past and continuing museological debates. It is pertinent to ask how the integration of theory outlined in the literature plays out in practice and formal strategies.

Community, however slippery a term, is more definable than the abstract nature of "other" in Said's *Orientalism*. This means there are tangible groups with which to work, however difficult they might be to define. Yet from a practical perspective, many institutions appear to be overlooking and undervaluing the potential that community interaction and engagement can bring to the production of their programs in an ongoing capacity. Or is it that the nature of working with communities is so embedded in the collecting and museological psyche that renaming it 'participatory practice' becomes a meaningless exercise? Is it, as Archibald (2004) mused, that the enduring nature of museum and community interaction has gone unrecognised in a society that focuses more on change than maintaining the status quo? Have museums worked with communities so consistently or in such a hierarchical context that political

commentators, external agencies and internal operators alike simply overlook the fact that museums have an important part to play in the practice and discourse of community engagement and participation?

Despite these queries, and the recognition of participatory ideals within the literature, many museums still develop community projects with little or only one-sided consultation. The impact of such projects, as Hirzy (2002: 16) noted, is questionable and frequently negative:

One-sided 'collaborations' created wholly in service to the museum's mission or in response to funders agendas, with inadequate attention to the mission of other participating organisations, leave the partner organizations feeling manipulated, exploited, and skeptical of the museum's motive. When audience development is the focal point and "community" is a code word for race, class, ethnicity, educational level, or other demographic characteristics, a museum's efforts can seem token and patronizing.

What, therefore, is the point in developing community projects that focus on one-sided approaches if such practices can be as obstructive to a project as not including the community in the first place? One of the challenges for the Australian museum industry is to integrate the more inclusive and collaborative approaches to consultative work with Indigenous and migrant communities as a guide to inclusive practice with other communities, and thus extend the relevance of museums in a broader section of society. Another challenge is to expand the evaluative practices to external projects and community engagement practices.

Apprehension regarding projects that integrate community engagement and participation into their methodology often underpins the apparent reluctance of institutions to develop ongoing participatory community projects within museums. Community engagement programs have a reputation for being intangible, unpredictable and time consuming (Hirzy, 2002; Igoe, 2002). Further, the development of community engagement projects threatens curatorial and institutional authority and their reputations as the providers of information (Schaffer-Bacon, 2002). These apprehensions contribute to wariness when it comes to advocating for extended community engagement projects. This is compounded by discrepancies between institutional timelines and those needed to engage communities in program development and delivery.

There is still much work to be done in relation to valuing and measuring community participation in the development of museum programs. Part of the problem for

participation in museums is embedded in the way the broad concepts of collaboration, consultation, inclusion and participation are understood and applied. Liaison, consultation, collaboration, inclusion, engagement and participation are terms that are used interchangeably by many museums seeking to work with communities. The fact that misconceptions about the nature and dimensions of genuine participatory projects endure means that institutions and communities remain unclear as to project boundaries and expectations.

It appears that one of the problems, therefore, is a matter of definition. A clear definition of terms is of great importance in this instance as these words denote a different type of engagement approach. Participation, in a general sense, is at the heart of these approaches, but it is not sufficient to simply broaden out the term to encompass the others. Rather, it seems important to note that while the real meaning of these terms are part of a process, they also embody different engagement processes and outcomes in their own right. This thesis, therefore, intends to explore a variety of definitions of engagement.

For the museum world, this raises a number of crucial questions. How do they integrate an understanding of the different participatory dimensions of community engagement projects into their planning processes? How do different museums define the concept of community? How do museums approach communities to be involved in their programs or respond to those with project ideas? What do participation and engagement mean in the discourse of museology? How do museums consult with communities and value, integrate and develop products on the basis of that consultation? How are collaborative projects defined and measured? What are the tangible outcomes and benefits for both institutions and communities in collaborative project development? What is the difference between community engagement and visitor research?

Although there has been increased focus and interest in the audience research and development arena, there is still a need to extend the research and apply it to a range of museum activities, including 'outreach' and community engagement projects. As noted above, Marginson's adaptation of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation to the museum exhibition development process can be read as attempt to amplify the levels of engagement within the museum sector (Arnstein, 1969; Marginson, 1993; Trotter, 1996c). Despite this, there is limited evidence of the model being integrated in museum

practice and planning. Scott (2002) argues that museums must reposition themselves in line with a social capital style of institutional analysis if the industry is to explore its full potential and social relevance. Without tangible examples and evaluation of participatory practices in the museum arena, these projects will remain undervalued and under-utilised.

At different times during the project conceptualisation, design, development and delivery, there is potential to liaise, engage, consult, participate, respond, evaluate and improve. Knowing when an intervention is needed or expected, and understanding the dimensions of different engagement techniques is of paramount importance. Garnering this knowledge and applying it to the way museums plan for and practice their engagement processes has the potential to promote the social relevance of these types of institutions at a practical level.

1.3.1 Interdisciplinary developments

Despite the shifts in cultural policy and outlook, the commitment to more inclusive behaviour and practice within museums remains less formally advanced than other disciplinary adoptions of participatory discourse. Action researchers and sociologists have explored participatory project development from a democratic perspective and in terms of community needs (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Wadsworth, 1993, 2001). Evaluation researchers have also embraced the participatory discourse via ‘utilization focused evaluation’ and ‘creative evaluation’ (Patton, 1981, 1997; Cummings, 2002).

The discipline of natural resource management has embraced the participation discourse overtly, and developed a more deliberative approach for developing and implementing community engagement projects (Dryzek, 2002; Ross et al., 2002). Natural resource management scholars have actively pursued and refined their community engagement techniques through community engagement toolkits and typologies (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Pretty, 1995). Further, public participation plays an integral role in the development of environmental and social impact assessment initiatives (Vanclay, 2002; Slootweg, et al. 2001). Community development workers and scholars have also embraced participatory practices in an attempt to make their processes more transparent and accountable, and to facilitate skills transfer (Craig & Porter, 1997; White, 1996; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Practitioners in the heritage industry are also beginning to recognise the value of collaborative approaches to the management and restoration of historic sites and monuments (Corsane, 2005; Davis, 1999, 2005; Ndoro & Pwiti, 2005). Cultural workers in the community cultural development arena also recognise the participatory dimensions of arts-based projects (Hawkes, 2001; Matarasso, 1997, 2000). Indeed there has been significant research and reflection on the social benefits of these types of projects, and for museums, these projects form tangible examples of the possibilities of cultural heritage collaboration. This interdisciplinary engagement with participatory discourse and implicit acknowledgement of participatory engagement practices are a useful guide for museums as they explore their social role and relevance.

1.4 Research aims and scope

The aim of this study is to explore the participatory dimensions and potential of collaborative community outreach projects, within the context of the Australian museum industry, in order to maintain institutional sustainability and social relevance, and create a participatory spectrum to assist the development of participatory projects within the museum sector. To do this, the thesis integrates the following research objectives and sub-objectives:

1. To explore the participatory potential of collaborative museum outreach projects by:

- reviewing participatory theory and its relevance to debates about institutional sustainability and social relevance
- exploring the nuances within the definition of participation
- reviewing literature on museums and participatory practices
- reviewing literature from other disciplines that use participatory approaches
- reviewing the historical and contemporary understandings of participatory practices in Australian museums

2. To test the participatory potential of collaborative museum outreach projects by:

- undertaking applied evaluation research on a major case study²
- undertaking research on two minor case studies that were developed by Australian museums and that specifically address NRM issues

3. To establish the credibility and relevance of participatory practices in museums by:

- identifying key concerns about participatory practices within museums
- interviewing key individuals within the Australian museum community
- responding to key questions and concerns that institutions and individuals have regarding museums, participatory practices and community engagement

² See Tables 6A and 6B, Chapter 6 for further clarification of the research aims of the major case study.

4. *To analyse interdisciplinary participatory practices, apply them to the Australian museum industry and develop a museum-specific participatory framework by:*

- translating participatory theory into tangible practice and policies
- identifying participatory principles that can inform policy development
- recommending different ways that museums can integrate participatory processes into project development

1.4.1 Discussion of research aims and objectives

The thesis argues that community engagement and participatory programs are tangible. It aims to explore the difference between the concepts of engagement and participation and reflect on how this is practiced and understood in the museum milieu. Implicit in this research is an understanding that that consultation gives rise to, but is not, participation; that participatory approaches and relationship building are at once time consuming and yet can be expedient; and that participatory approaches can inspire interaction, empowerment and creativity in worlds including and beyond museums. By exploring these dimensions in relation to interdisciplinary approaches, this research aims to help the industry claw back some of the social relevance it has relinquished whilst trying to identify exactly what role museums can play in contemporary society.

Perceived problems in the way museums value the contribution of communities to their programs, the process through which museums interact with communities, and the inherent value of participatory process are the impetus for this research. The thesis considers whether community engagement should be written into policies and agendas without considering the current operating framework for participatory/community engagement practices within museum. It aims to explore how museums can demarcate space within the burgeoning community engagement arena to identify how museum activities fit into this participatory milieu.³

Although practiced and acknowledged, community liaison and engagement within museums has, to some extent, has been caught in time and thus removed itself from debates inherent in participatory discourse. This thesis argues that museums can evolve to incorporate new models of participatory practice that go beyond the rhetoric of

³ See also the research methodology chapter, Chapter 3.

participation and which endeavour to deliver mutual benefits for institutions and communities alike via the process of participation.

1.4.2 Scope

The research in this thesis considers international movements and theories in museology in the context of participatory discourses, and applies this to the Australian museum industry. In particular, it comprises research into one major case study and two minor case studies, all of which relate to NRM in Australia, and considers them from an evaluative, participative and collaborative perspective. The thesis also draws on a number of international examples of participatory projects in the NRM⁴, heritage and community development arenas as a point of contrast to the way the museum industry engages with participatory ideas, and as points of contrast to the case studies discussed. International commentary, research and analysis would enhance these discussions, however, international perspectives must be limited to those identified in the literature available.

Further, as this thesis advocates participatory practices are inherently linked to a local context (geographic, political, social and cultural), its primary focus is on Australian museum projects. International examples are drawn from America, England, Canada and France, countries with similar political preconditions (such as elected democracies) that enable participatory processes to be integrated into the cultural industries.

Many of the participatory projects illustrated in this thesis have been developed by larger regional and state museums or the NMA. These projects were chosen for a number of reasons. The major case study, *Basin Bytes*, is an outreach project devised by the Public Programs Division of the NMA. This choice was made possible, as well as governed, by the partnership arrangements specific to an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, of which this research thesis is one outcome.⁵ The choice of the minor

⁴ For the purposes of this thesis NRM is considered in an Australian context and thereby relates specifically to activities undertaken by those working in the management of natural and agricultural resources. Although the potential for broader discussion of the links between nature and culture is substantial, this theoretical discussion is outside the scope of this thesis.

⁵ The funding for this thesis was provided as part of a research project called *Committing to Place*. This collaborative research project between the NMA, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (hereafter MDBC) and the University of Tasmania (hereafter UTAS) was supported by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant. It resulted in the NMA developing the Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project, of which 4 projects were a part.

case studies was made specifically for their NRM content and participatory dimensions. The choice of the other projects has been made, primarily, in regards to the participatory dimensions of each project. However, it should also be noted that there are a substantial number of museums operating in Australia, comprising, according to census figures from 2000, 2049 museum establishments (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2005: website). This number, therefore, requires limitation for the purposes of this research. However, Stapleton's (2004) concern that community and regional museums are often overlooked for research and analysis is addressed as this thesis examines the concept of different types of museums, including State museums, ecomuseums, community museums and regional museums.

Further, the thesis acknowledges the contribution museum-based researchers and scientists have made to biodiversity awareness (American Association of Museums Environmental Committee (AAMEC), 1971; Davis, 1996). The Australian Museum's *Future of Australia's Threatened Ecosystems* (FATE) (now managed at the University of New South Wales but which originated at the Australian Museum, Sydney), for example:

aims to investigate the value of sustainability using native species in Australia's threatened ecosystems to enhance the long-term conservation of Australian biodiversity and through this process to increase the resilience and economic viability of rural and regional Australia (Fate Program, Australian Museum, 2003: website).

Although this clearly illustrates the potential for natural science-based museum initiatives to contribute to the sustainability debate, its limited participatory dimensions, and the research focus make it unsuitable for detailed analysis in this thesis. These considerations, as well as an interest in the human dimensions of environmental issues in museums, required limiting the parameters for choosing project to assess. This distinction also reflects that drawn between agricultural extension projects and scientific/technical projects in the NRM arena (Vanclay & Lawrence, 1995; Vanclay, 1999, 2004c).

The *Committing to Place* Research Team comprised of 6 researchers: Professor Frank Vanclay, Dr Damian Lucas, Joanna Wills and Sophie Henry from the University of Tasmania, Dr Ruth Lane from RMIT University and Dr Ian Coates from the NMA. Team members submitted evaluation reports for each outreach project assessed, including the three *Basin Bytes* project that are discussed at length in this thesis (Chapter 6). Further information regarding the *Committing to Place* project can be found in Vanclay et al. (2004d).

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Part three analyses the information gathered throughout the research in the context of participatory principles and ideas identified in participatory discourse. Chapter 7 discusses and suggests the issues museums need to address to run participatory projects effectively. On the basis of research findings, this section will propose a model/spectrum for participation measurement and recognition in museum practice. The conclusion (Chapter 8) reflects on the potential for participatory projects in museums on the basis of the research conducted. It argues that these types of projects are genuinely effective for engaging communities, and have the capacity to extend museums social role so that they can address issues of social concern (such as NRM) and remain relevant to their audiences. It advocates that a participatory spectrum will assist museums in the way they develop, deliver and derive benefits from participatory programs, and that this will lead to more genuine, rewarding and potentially transformational community engagement experiences and projects in the museum sector.

CHAPTER 2

*Theorising participation in museums:
a review of literature from relevant disciplines*

*(museum studies, participation, community engagement, natural resource
management, community cultural development, heritage
and community development)*

2.1 Introduction: theorising participation in museums

The previous chapter introduced the problem of defining museums and their role in society. It also briefly considered the dilemmas inherent in understanding what is meant by the concept of participation. It is necessary to trace the development of public museums and unpack the concept of participation to identify past practice and paradigms, however, this chapter is not a comprehensive overview of museum history or of democratic theory. The purpose of this review is to identify participatory principles and practices within participatory literature and to consider them in relation to community engagement models practiced by a range of other disciplines. It then investigates how these participatory principles are addressed by scholars in the field of museum studies, and considers key participatory and community engagement models and methodologies that have been devised by museum industry practitioners and academics.

The pursuit and integration of participatory practices in the museum industry represents an ongoing and significant challenge; it has been the basis for substantial change and reflection since the late 1960s, and even, one could argue, since the Enlightenment (Bennett, 1995; Hein, 2000; Rivière, 1985; Vergo, 1989; Weil, 1990, 1999, 2002; Witcomb, 2003). Museums have searched for ways to incorporate participatory practices and a more diverse range of stakeholders into their work without compromising the curatorial research, scholarship and expertise that has traditionally been the basis of the museum profession. The industry, for example, has expanded and reframed its interpretive mission to be more socially inclusive and accessible (ICOM Statutes, art.2. para.1, 2001; Bennett, 1996; Beck & Cable, 2002; Dodd & Sandell, 2001; McAlear, 1996; Tilden, 1977; Trotter, 1996). Further, a culture of evaluation, audience and visitor research has emerged within museums, and numerous scholars have addressed this in both an academic and applied capacity (Kelly, 2004; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2001; Scott, 2002, 2004; Screven, 1974; Shettel, 1989). Museologists have also reconceptualised the notion of museum education to include museum pedagogy, ‘meaning-making’ and lifelong learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein & Alexander, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 2001; Silverman, 1995, 1999).

Museums in the 21st century are very different institutions to the treasure troves developed by private collectors and explorers prior to the Enlightenment period (Preziosi, 2004; Hudson, 1998), and the evolutionary colonial museums of the 19th century (Bennett, 2004). The changes wrought by the emergence of political and social democracy have left their mark on cultural institutions and their governance and activities (Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). The extent to which these changes facilitate authentic opportunities for the integration of participatory paradigms and practices into the museum industry is at the heart of this research. By discussing museums in relation to the democratic and social principles advocated for during the Enlightenment, this dissertation acknowledges the importance of political democracy and democratic theory to the notion of participation itself.

Although there are still many private collectors, and a significant number of private or 'independent' museums (Preziosi, 2004; Cameron, 1971), the emergence of publicly accessible and government-funded collecting institutions (national, state, regional, community, local or subject specific) that retain a pedagogical mission has remained a crucial aspect of the evolving concept of a museum (Hudson, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Bennett, 1995). In an acknowledgement of the different types of museums that make up the museum industry, however, Weil (2002), Hein (2000), Stapleton (2004) and Ambrose & Paine (1993) have challenged references to 'the museum' as a singular entity as unrealistic. Recognition of the diversity of museums, therefore, makes an impact on any assessment of participatory practices within the museum sector.

In addition, recognising the diversity of museum audiences and communities further complicates an understanding of the types of participatory practices available and applicable within museums. Central to this discussion is the perception of museums' usefulness and purpose. Weil (2002) asserted that museums need to understand their worth as more than just the maintenance of collections and rarities, and echoed the influential American museologist John Cotton Dana's belief that "a museum is good only insofar as it is of use" (Weil, 2002: 182; Dana in Peniston, 1999). Dana's work essentially critiqued public museums in favour of community models and introduced ideas and questions about what public and community museums should be, and who for, into the same sphere. Weil (2002) believed Dana's idea for new types of museums, and the way he articulated the fundamental nature of public museums as 'exchange

transactions', was far sighted and visionary. He interpreted Dana's challenge to the industry to be more conscious of the needs of their audiences and constituent communities as a precursor to a movement known as the New Museology that brought about changes in museum practice during the 1970s (Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections Australia, 1975; Cameron, 1971; AAMEC, 1971; de Varine, 1985; Hauenschild, 1988; Lemieux, 1971; Mayrand, 1985; Vergo, 1989). Emerging from Dana's writings is the possibility that different types of museums could learn from each other in order to enhance the practice, process and reception of museum work. Such a task, nonetheless, still requires substantial reflection about what it is these museums want to be, and will necessitate decisions about which aspects of other types of museums they want to adopt or discard.

The relationship between the museum and the public has also been the concern of contemporary museologists. Indeed, audience and visitor research has become central to the work of many museums, particularly large or state museums for which audience numbers are also used to reflect relevance and funding (Kelly, 2004; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Janes & Conaty, 2005). Weil's (1997) reflections about the continuing relevance of museums in contemporary society contain a sufficient element of doubt as to warrant serious consideration of what museums can actually offer. He identified a social space for museums:

To be a place for personal self-affirmation, to contribute importantly to the health of human communities, to be a place where the melting pot melts ... those seem some reasonably powerful arguments to justify this ongoing effort to build the museum of the near future (Weil 1997: 267).

One wonders, however, whether Weil questions the dimensions of museums rigorously enough, specifically regarding the need to extend the view of the public/audience to be participants in the creative process. Weil's musing positioned museums as contributors to healthy communities anticipated the subsequent social inclusion discourse (Sandell, 1998; Dodd & Sandell, 2001), and spilled over into discussions about institutional sustainability. But his reflections still placed the museum as the central authority in the exchange process. Further, Weil's description of museums as a 'place' that people visit, is in contrast to the community museums, ecomuseum model and the idea of cultural landscapes that emerged from the New Museology rhetoric of the 1970s (and which is discussed in more detail in section 2.4.3 and 2.6.1), and therefore represents a challenge to those institutions striving to develop outreach programs and community links away from the central, physical hub of the museum.

Combining the idea of community and museums is at the centre of Hallett's (2003) re-conceptualisation of museums. Hallett (2003) believed that the very essence of museum work is embedded in its constituent communities and that these should therefore guide the museum directive. This challenge to the industry provides a platform via which museums can reframe their community interaction and impact; by making community the foundation of the relationship, there is potential to increase interaction and engagement in museum work in order to advance a sense of well-being, self knowledge and sustainability. Such a proposal provides an overarching framework into which participatory principles and approaches could be inserted. However, it also requires a flexible/adaptive model for implementation that recognises the different needs of different communities.

The potential for developing adaptive museums has been addressed by Sola & Suomen (1997) and Sola (2001), who considered museums in the context of a humanist framework, one that challenged museums' usefulness, relevance and ability to respond to the needs of their constituent communities. Sola (2001: 57) argued:

If a profession claims the experience and insight and a full understanding of its mission, it should be, therefore, capable of proactive practice, inventing and installing [museum projects] when and where they are needed. This requires a high level of cooperation and innovation; it implies social responsibility and, above all, it requires creativeness.

Sola's quest for innovation, responsibility and creativeness – via a responsive and organic institution – is a noble vision for an industry that is under increasing pressure to document and demonstrate their social and economic sustainability. By proposing a mobile and needs-based model that combines “provocation”, “contemplation” and “entertainment” with traditional museum functions, Sola (2001: 57) created a blueprint for a form of global outreach project – one that incorporates the core functions of a museum but which could adapt and respond to the needs of the particular community with which it was working. But it also raises a question of intent. Who decides where and when such projects are needed? Further, one needs to consider whether there is there a link between participation, creativity and an adaptive and socially responsible museum industry? Although somewhat idealistic, the potential for such a model to incorporate participatory dimensions is substantial, particularly for national institutions aiming to extend and improve their community relationships and collaboration.

Scholars in the burgeoning museum studies field have examined the complexity and dilemmas facing modern museums; their work could form the basis of a much longer discussion. The purpose of this review, however, is to identify those issues relevant to a discussion of participatory practices. It is therefore important to explore the definition of participation so as to understand how it is practiced and how it can further contribute to the sustainability of the museum industry.

2.2 Defining participation

The word ‘participate’ can be defined, at a basic level, as having a share of, or taking part in something (Sykes, 1979). The act of participation, therefore, necessitates being involved in something. If more than one person is involved in the act of participating, one can then speculate as to whether or not there is a sense of agreement, communication, cooperation, collaboration and/or at least tacit understanding (at some level) about what it is they are participating in. As a collective activity, this can then be subject to different layers of speculation about the implicit power relationships and hierarchy that are embedded in this interaction. This is particularly the case in terms of gender and those from non western cultural backgrounds (Gujit & Shah, 1999).

From an historical and philosophical perspective, however, the term participation has assumed different meanings, and these have problematised the way this terminology is understood and used. The development of the term participation can be traced, for example, from medieval and Protestant Christianity to the Enlightenment (Sykes, 1979), and considered in relation to the level of agency and fellowship that are implicit in the concept (Patton, 2005). This link to the idea of spiritual fellowship, commonality and bonding has been invoked by contemporary thinkers, such as Putnam (2000) and Fukuyama (1999), who have tied it to the concept of social capital.

Citizen participation as an essential part of a ‘just society’ has been discussed by philosophers from classical Greece and contemporary scholars of the classics and political theory (Plato 1991; Habermas, 1989; Rawls, 1971). These scholars explored the concept of democracy as the embodiment of people power and self-governance, a concept that relies upon citizen participation and inclusion in the political process. Rousseau (1968 [1762]), for example, discussed participation in relation to ideas about civil liberties and democracy that were based around individual rather than collective decision making. For Rousseau, it was the process of decision making that made the individual aware of collective social needs and thus responsive to, rather than emerging from, the concept of ‘the general will’ (Pateman, 1970).

Contemporary agencies, such as The World Bank, define participation as: “the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-

making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services” (The World Bank, 2005: Participation and Civic Engagement website). Participation is seen a valuable concept because it “helps build ownership and enhances transparency and accountability, and in doing so enhances effectiveness of development projects and policies” (The World Bank, 2005: Participation and Civic Engagement Website). Thus in an applied and contemporary context, participation is seen as a process that includes people in decision making, and that this helps develop social understandings, communication and development and also fosters personal capacity.

If we understand participation, in essence, as a democratic concept, one that goes beyond the notion of voting and representation to denote agency, activity, engagement, involvement, trust and reciprocity, then we need to consider participation in relation to democratic governance. If we understand democracy as a concept that comprises freedom, justice, equality and solidarity (Habermas, 1989; Keane, 2004; Kellner, undated; Rawls, 1971; Rousseau, 1968 [1762]), one that has been at the centre of substantial scholarly debate for centuries, then exploring the links between the concepts appears to be a logical place from which to begin any discussion about the nature of participation. The dynamic and democratic qualities inherent in the notion of participation give the term a transformative dimension, and it is in this capacity that participation is considered by many scholars, and in this thesis, as a useful concept via which to discuss cultural, environmental, political and social change.

Yet some scholars are wary of the way the participation rhetoric is seen as a cure-all for development problems and social exclusion. Heeks (1999: 2), for example, argued:

Like ‘motherhood and apple pie’, participation defies tight definition, yet is regarded as a ‘good thing’. It thus attains the status of a new mantra amongst development agencies, despite limited hard evidence of success of participation (Cleaver 1998). Its mantra status is confirmed by the fact that most debate has settled into discussion about different participative techniques rather than a deeper or continuous questioning of the value of participation *per se*.

Heeks (1999) went on to try and expose participation as a form of tyranny by highlighting the way participatory theory and practices ignored political and social context, ignored the fundamental tenets of participation, and ignored the realities of context and poor outcomes. Others, like Vincent (2003: 3), focused their critique on what it is people are participating in and on the engagement process:

Participatory development implies ... that people must actively do something, but it also implies that they engage in a process already established by others. Being a *participant* in, for example, a conference, means that you are not the *organizer* of the conference. Similarly, the underlying implication of participatory development is that people will be joining a game the rules of which have already been decided (Vincent's emphasis).

The link between participation and notions of democracy has further problematised the definition of the term. If one considers that defining democracy and its dimensions is an ongoing and highly contested process within academia, it is reasonable to suggest that any quest to understand what participation means is also a complex task. Indeed, just as some think of democracy as an embryonic concept if it is considered as adaptive to a range of social demands and contexts, so too can participation be considered as an organic term (Keane, 2004; Chandler, 2001). Such interpretations are relevant to and make an impact on the evolving definition of museums (although clearly, democracy is far more complex).

Yet the multiple dimensions of the term democracy and the participatory connotations it embodies influences the type of democratic principles and processes that can be integrated into museum practice. After examining the etymology of the term democracy, for example, Keane (2004) considered the propensity for democratic principles to be misused and/or misunderstood as a concept used to justify “bullying others in the name of self government” (2004: 14); that is “driven by elitist motives wrapped in universalist claims” (2004: 21); or as one that is often confused with populism. Democratic principles, Keane (2004) argued, transcend the democratic state and thus the participatory state. He dismissed the concept of democracy as the rule of the people by the people as ‘simple democracy’, a platitude he believed undermined the true spirit of democracy.

Misuse or confusion about the notion of democracy means that participatory dimensions of the democratic process can also be seen from a negative perspective and as activities that can destabilise the course of governance and social progress (Kellner, 2000; Roberts, 2000). Worse, some critics believe public participation is irrevocably linked with notions of extremism or totalitarianism, a charge that has been levelled consistently at advocates of participatory practice (Putnam, 2000; Schulman, 1978). Others, like Chandler (2001) specifically attack the process of predefining participatory processes as counter productive and antithetical to the democratic process:

The top-down impulse to institutionalize and encourage participation is either exclusionary, establishing middle class activist forums as a replacement for popular involvement, or it is destructive because it dehumanizes and 'dumbs down' areas it moves into. The attempt to institutionalize spontaneous forms of participation repackages them without the content which made them engaging in the first place. This is why participation per se is not the answer, and why the question of what the ends of participation are is important (2001: 11).

This discussion captures the essence of the participatory dilemma – if one has to ask for participation in a project or idea, is the individual impetus to participate missing? The museum sector's tendency to predefine the project outcomes as opposed to the processes (for example, to decide to develop a specifically themed community exhibition prior to or without undertaking any community consultation) goes beyond Chandler's dissatisfaction with institutionalised participation. If a museum has already defined the intended outcome and output, what exactly is it that they are asking communities to participate in during the production process, and can this really be called participation? Further, many of Chandler's criticisms and charges are repeated subconsciously in practice: adopting participatory practices without understanding the impact they can make is not generally a form of premeditated exclusion but can have negative consequences. When this occurs, institutions often respond to the negative aspects of the participatory experience and adhere to these rather than attempting to rethink their engagement strategies.

The limited adoption of formalised participatory practices in a variety of arenas, including the museums arena, illustrates this hesitance and mistrust of participatory principles. Fear of participatory practices is expressed as apprehension and seen as loss of control (Shaffer Bacon, 2002). Further, fear of participation can be linked with what Gurian (1996) termed 'congregant behaviour', which she believed had both positive and negative potential. Although Gurian was using the notion of collective behaviour in a broad context, her reflections mirror both the doubts and positives inherent in the development and delivery of participatory programs.

2.2.1 Participation and democracy

To understand the relevance and impact the concept of participation has had on the way democratic society has developed, this review has considered literature from the political science arena. Numerous scholars in the political science field (Cole, 1919, 1920; Habermas, 1989; Mill, 1963; Rawls, 1971; Schumpeter, 1943; Pateman, 1970) have considered the participatory dimensions of democracy in relation to representative

government, the justice system, trade unionism, socialism and totalitarianism. With the rise of communism and socialism, and the emergence of totalitarianism during the early to mid 20th century, public participation as a key component of democratic political systems has been subjected to substantial criticism and review. Berelson (1954, 1966), Eckstein (1966), Satori (1962) and Schumpeter (1943) attacked the utopian visions of “the classical formulation of democratic theory” (Pateman, 1970: 2). Their analysis of the democratic system specifically disputed the ideal of ‘participatory’ democracy on the grounds that it was untenable. The system they advocated focussed on the stability of the political system as opposed to one that considered the needs of individual citizens or that had the potential to be made vulnerable by the presence of dissident groups. In short, it was one in which public participation in the political process was kept to a minimum (Berelson, 1954; Schumpeter, 1943). This analysis meant a representative system remained the key model via which to deliver a democratic society.

This interpretation was vigorously challenged as anti-democratic (Pateman, 1970). Pateman used the industrial sector to illustrate the relevance of citizen participation in the democratic processes of those political systems operating beyond the political sector. Pateman believed that “the notion of a participatory society requires that the scope of the term ‘political’ be extended to cover spheres outside national government” (1970: 106). This argument, developed in the 1960s/1970s, mirrored the rise of powerful social movements outside the sphere of national government. The feminism, civil rights and environmental movements, as well as the student riots of 1968, confronted the political sector and civil society, vocalising and radicalising opposition to what was perceived as discriminatory and destructive behaviour that infringed on peoples’ rights. These campaigns and their associated ideals were tangible: they gave the public something in which to participate and ideals to advocate. To some extent, they embody the core values of democracy that Keane (2004) identified as freedom, equality and solidarity. Keane, however, has been unable to locate these ‘non-negotiable’ aspects of democracy in current models of ‘simple democracy’. He advocated, therefore, for a system he called ‘complex democracy’ that:

refer[s] both descriptively and normatively, to non-violent modes of power-sharing government and ways of life in which decision making and the distribution of power among citizens are based on the precept that no body rules (2004: 3).

Removing the single ‘body’ in the democratic model allows for dimensions/layers of participation and multiple actors. It enables the principle of reciprocity to emerge as one

of the cornerstones upon which participatory democratic behaviour is built (Gutmann & Thompson, 2002). This extends Pateman's concept of looking at "*the broader networks that bind society*" (Pateman discussed in Chandler, 2001: 3), and links to deliberative approaches to democracy and citizen participation (Abelson et al., 2003; Dryzek, 2002; Gutmann & Thompson, 2002; Shapiro, 2002). There are a number of problems inherent in the deliberative process, including recognizing the need for time to include a range of perspectives and views in governance, and, as Shapiro (2002) argued, the fact that these activities cost time and money. Further, Sanders (1997: 2) refuted the idea that deliberative processes contributed to "increased autonomy and an expanded sense of community" on the basis that not everyone has the same economic, educational or communicative capacity to participate with deliberative structures. This then facilitates a form of selective participation based on people's ability to communicate effectively.

But reciprocity, the ability for mutual input and consideration of others' issues and ideas that are then manipulated to create common laws and public policy (in the political arena) (Guttmann & Thompson, 2002) sets up a precedent for valuing participatory processes. Deliberative (direct) democracy, therefore, offers more potential for participation than the representative democracy that is practiced by western governments (McGregor, 2004). Broadening the political sphere and reflecting on the democratic processes at work in other social sectors has, therefore, great relevance for the cultural sector.

2.2.2 Participation, education and learning

In order to participate effectively, this dissertation contends that there are two fundamental attributes required: capacity and confidence. These skills are not always innate, but they can be developed via education and learning, and are important concepts in this discussion. There is considerable literature about teaching the principles of democracy (Carr & Hartnett, 1996; Kelly, 1995; Gutmann, 1987; Giroux, 1989; McGregor, 2004). This research, however, focuses on education being the result of the participatory process. This reflects Pateman's (1970) belief in the different spheres for democratic behavior, ideas that were also central to the writings of influential philosopher John Dewey. Dewey (1916) argued education was a social process and that learning occurred continuously. Thus, learning by doing and, conversely, doing by

learning are central tenets of the participatory democratic paradigm (Dewey, 1916; Pateman, 1970; Schugurensky, 2003):

The major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is therefore an educative one, educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological aspect and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures ... Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so (Pateman 1970: 42-43).

The notion that experience leads to greater knowledge, and thus equips the individual with the capacity to continue learning and growing, has been explored by a range of authors (Dewey, 1916; Wenger, 1998; Rousseau, 1968; Mill, 1965; Cole 1919). Wenger (1998), for example, grounded his discussion about knowledge and learning in the process of participation:

Educational processes based ... on actual participation are effective in fostering learning not just because they are better pedagogical ideas, but more fundamentally because they are 'epistemologically correct', so to speak. There is a match between knowing and learning, between the nature of competence and the process by which it is acquired, shared and extended (Wenger, 1998: 101-102).

If experiential learning can bring about change and growth, and if participation is central to the learning process, then recognising the transformative potential of the educative process is crucial. Transformative learning is applicable to both formal and informal education settings and:

seeks to empower students with the capacity to critique their world, imagine preferred futures and (importantly) act to create or bring about those futures. As such, it places emphasis on factors such as hope and optimism, critical literacy, imagination, resilience, connectedness, self-efficacy and active citizenship (Henry, 2005).

A seminal work in this context is Friere's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It challenged teachers to consider not only the process and delivery of education to underprivileged groups, but also the type of education experience they were actually offering – domesticating or liberating education. Mayo (2003: 42) drew on Friere's work to advocate for an "emancipatory vision of education [in which] educational processes are not meant to consider 'what is' but are driven by a vision of 'what should and can be'". The holistic element of transformative learning featured strongly the writings of Neville (2001) and Mayo (2003). Their work has highlighted the value of a social constructivist approach to learning, one that reflects and responds to the multiple contexts (as indeed does Gardner's (1996) multiple intelligences theory), and the socio-political condition of both those conducting and those undergoing the educative process. While Mayo drew on Friere (1970), Neville (2001) looked to the writings of 1920s educationalist of Whitehead (1925, 1929, 1932) to promote the importance of living,

and the imaginative and creative education that emerges via process learning and thinking. In both cases, the participation of the learner is central to the learning process and outcome.

Although advocates of social change have worked principally in the political arena, Mayo, (2003), McGregor (2004), Neville (2001) and Illeris (2004) have argued that transformative learning and education offers the potential for individual empowerment and thus collective agency. McGregor (2004) noted that dialogue (and thus a sense of deliberation) is central to the transformative process. She used Habermas (1989) to relate transformative learning to social transformation, and drew parallels between the emphasis on dialogue and respect in the deliberative process and the pursuit of transformative education. The idea of the participatory state being intimately connected to the process of change, with transformative social, personal and collective principles was clearly paraphrased by Mayo (2003: 432):

Participation allows for citizens to develop personal and social competencies essential for political action ... to become empowered by exerting control over their lives and the life of their communities ... to improve their sense of community ... to get involved in the process of public deliberation over citizen definition and expansion ... and to experience face to face interactions with other citizens who might have different perspectives on the common good, thus increasing both social pluralism ... interpersonal trust and tolerance.

These critical observations recognise a need to develop personal and social competencies, such as oracy that will help people be involved in future activities. But just as people have difference kinds of social competencies, so too they have different styles of learning. They acknowledge the importance of face to face interaction as a means by which relationships can be enhanced and perspectives broadened. They identify the need for people to be empowered and in control of those decisions required to live and grow. Further, they illustrate the need for individuals to identify or build a sense of community, accept social differences as a vital part of community, and trust that these differences are still underpinned by notions of fairness and equality. They also validate the need to be involved in deliberative processes to improve community representation

These observations also reinforce the concept of process within the participatory milieu. The processes underpinning the development of participatory projects need, therefore, to take account of the potential for learning and engagement even if a project has specific outcomes inbuilt into its conceptualisation. They need to facilitate opportunities

for learning and empowerment, fairness and equality, trustworthy and reciprocity, attributes of democracy that still hold intrinsic worth in their own right.⁷

2.2.3 Participation and community

When the terms ‘community’ and ‘participation’ are used together, it often gives rise to speculation about the nature of community and the type of participation in which they are involved. Participation by members of the local (usually geographic) community is deemed to be an important dimension of project development, or an indicator of project success. Yet many organisations often fail to see themselves as one type of the many communities involved in the participatory process. As a result, some projects are developed at a distance: not recognising the diverse dimensions of communities, and thus human interaction, can lead to missed opportunities and a sense of disengagement and/or separation.

The term ‘communities of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) has emerged to support the concept of social capital as scholars endeavour to identify linkages between groups of people (Kilpatrick & Vanclay, 2002). Wenger (1998: 182) grappled with the elusive qualities of the term community and its blurred boundaries and dimensions, and considered it in relation to the notion of belonging through “engagement, imagination and alignment”. In this way, he was able to cater for the organic and multifaceted nature of communities:

One could endeavour to list the types of communities: of practice, of affinity, of taste, of interest, of economic status, of profession, of geographical proximity, of experience, of allegiance of standardization and so on ... But such a list goes on and on. Rather than classifying communities under fixed categories, the modes of belonging [engagement, imagination and alignment] ... provide a framework for understanding how these communities are constituted (Wenger, 1998: 182).

This interpretation of community builds on Habermas’ (1989) idea of the public sphere and Pateman’s plurality of that notion. The community sector thus emerges as a powerful arena in which to practice and refine democratic principles. More than just a sphere, it has become an active segment of democratic society. Local government plays a crucial role in this link between government and community. Although relevant in an Australian context (McShane, 2005), it is particularly evident in the social inclusion imperative for arts and heritage in New Labour Britain, where local councils are seen as

⁷ Learning is addressed in relation to the museum sector in section 2.5.3 *Museum and learning*

the site and point of connection to local communities in an attempt to engage more people in the political system (Anderson, 2005; Chandler, 2000; Selwood, 2004).

In addition, the concept of community facilitates engagement in the work of cultural heritage agencies and community development organisations, particularly in developing countries where western concepts of participation through democracy might not be immediately achievable. UNESCO and the International Centre for Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), for example, promote the use of community participation as part of an integrated conservation management strategy for cultural heritage with implicit recognition of its relevance to heritage management for developing countries (Grattan, 2004). England's Local Heritage Initiative (replaced in 2006 by the Commission for Rural Communities), however, is a particularly good example of government engaging communities in the discovery and care of local heritage material (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2005: website).

This activism has stimulated research within the applied sciences. The burgeoning research areas of community health, community development and community cultural development for example, require a more in-depth discussion and definition of the word 'community'. Yet, just as 'participation' and 'democracy' have been constantly redefined, so too the word 'community' has evolved as a slippery and changeable conceptual term. For many, the word 'community' is synonymous with the notion of fellowship and relationships between people and/or the public (Schwartz, 2005). Williams (1976: 76) suggested it was "a warmly persuasive word [used] to describe an existing set of relationships", although scholars also caution against these emotive overtones (Putnam, 2000; Plant, 1974).

Evolving social and political structures, however, have challenged the notion of 'community' as fellowship. For many social theorists, such as Engels, Jefferson, Marx and Weber (cited in Schwartz, 2005), the term had to be considered in relation to the economic and industrial nature of society. In representative political systems, governments have limited ability to embody the level of intimacy that the notion of community suggests (Plant, 1974). It should be noted, however, that the term also denotes the collective of individuals outside the political systems, a concept illustrated,

for example, by the phrase ‘grass roots’ community action, and which is particularly prevalent in the community development arena.

The language of participation has changed since the publication of Pateman’s (1970) *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Similar concepts of participation in civic institutions and the social sector (in terms of reciprocity, trust, engagement), however, can be found in discussions of social capital, communities of practice and community empowerment. It is worth reflecting on the definition of social capital and communities of practice in this context, as it draws on Pateman’s (1970) notion of expanded platforms for democratic activities and Habermas’ (1989) notion of the public sphere.

In a comparative analysis of social capital and communities of practice, Kilpatrick and Vanclay (2005: 23) defined social capital as “the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively”. They drew on the work of Lesser & Prusak (2000), Lesser & Storck (2001) and Putnam (2000) to outline three dimensions within social capital discourse – “a structural element (such as networks), a relational element (such as norms, values and trust), and a cognitive element (shared language, vocabulary, stories, history and context)” (Kilpatrick & Vanclay, 2003: 7) – and argued that the idea of social capital encompasses the notion of communities of practice.

The loss of community and social disengagement in America in the context of changing social structures and networks was the focus of Putnam’s (2000) influential publication *Bowling Alone*. Putnam (2000: 19) defined social capital as “connections among individuals [which are] most powerful in dense networks”. He identified social, cultural, technological, religious, educational and civil factors that contributed to the decline of participatory social and civic practices. Putnam recognised different types of social capital that were dependent on context and relationships, and noted:

Bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity ... Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external issues and for information diffusion ... Moreover bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves ... Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD40⁸ (2000: 22-23).

⁸ Known as “the can with a thousand uses, WD-40 protects metal from rust and corrosion, penetrates stuck parts, displaces moisture, and lubricates just about anything” (WD40, 2005: website).

Different situations require different approaches and forms of participation in order to generate community engagement. One is not superior to the other; however, understanding the dimensions, processes, and practices of engagement is necessary in order to work with communities that occupy a sector in which notions of democracy and equality are relatively entrenched.

The interdependency of the concepts of social capital and communities of practice has been examined by Kilpatrick and Vanclay (2005). Communities of practice, they argued, encompassed different types of communities, such as communities of place and interest. Thus they saw the term 'community' as at once all encompassing and heterogeneous. Those engaged in sense of place discourse (Stedman, 2003; Hogan, 2001; Seddon, 1972; Barraket, 2004; Eisenhauer, 2000) have privileged the degree to which place shapes identity and community. Fischer (2004) argued that communities of interest "bring together stakeholders from different CoPs [communities of practice] to solve a particular ... problem[s] of common concern", an approach that at once contests and verifies Kilpatrick & Vanclay's (2005) claim.

Combining 'community' with 'participation', therefore, is a challenging task. Indeed, one could argue that the concept of participation within these different types of communities is contingent on a variety of factors. For museums, these factors challenge the notion of participation itself. The profession needs to consider whether, or in which situations, individual (direct) participation and/or collective (representative) participation is appropriate? Rather than espouse a single definition of participation, this thesis adopts the concept of participation as a transformative process, one that is inherently linked with the concept of democracy, and recognises the importance of context to its application.

2.3 Participation and community engagement: models from representative disciplines

Participatory practices, in both contemporary museum practice and literature, relate to access, inclusion, learning and pluralism. As practices, they have emerged slowly and have origins in social and political development from the Enlightenment period through the 1960s and 1970s to the turn of the 21st century. Further, and significantly, they have evolved in relation to social justice principles and human rights, a growing awareness of the value of culture to wellbeing and an evolving understanding the dimensions of community.

Museologists are joined by scholars from a variety of disciplines in their discussion of how to work with communities and value that interaction. Rural sociologists, natural resource management extension officers, education specialists, community development workers and cultural geographers are engaged in ongoing discussions about the nature and implementation of community-based projects. Not all of these commentators favour the use of community in this context. Indeed, some are quite critical of the notion of community being used as a bandaid for a range of social problems and issues (Bryson & Mowbray, 1981). Many of these writers (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Barraket, 2004), like critics in the museum world (Bennett, 1995; Karp, 1992), argue there is a need to understand the dimensions of community to be aware of the potential impact of these projects, and in this context writings by Wenger (1998), Kilpatrick & Vancley (2002), Karp (1992) and the American Association of Museums (2002b) have helped shape discussions in this arena.

Participatory discourse is interdisciplinary and multifaceted: its link to theories of democracy, learning, natural resource management, planning, community health and development, as well as to the arts and humanities, illustrate its relevance and value as a concept and tool for analytical research. Scholars have responded to the contextual nature of the participatory state (Mayo, 2003; Friere, 1970), as well as to the changing nature of society that focussed on a more communitarian model during the 1960s, and have developed ways of understanding the degrees of participation by developing ladders of participation and participatory spectrums.

Of these models, Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation is perhaps the most well known and used (see Figure 2.1). The ladder was developed for the planning industry but has been the foundation upon which subsequent participation models have been developed. It triggered greater consideration of the variables and contexts which make a participatory process genuinely participatory. While participation was considered a positive form of behaviour, Arnstein realised the reality, in a majority of circumstances, was that those in positions of power stood to gain the most from the participatory process. It was devised to illustrate and understand the different kinds of citizen participation that occurred in society, and Arnstein examined the distribution of power inherent in the participatory process. The model tested the degree to which certain activities could be considered legitimately participatory – a challenge that remains relevant despite the different literature and community engagement theory that has since emerged.

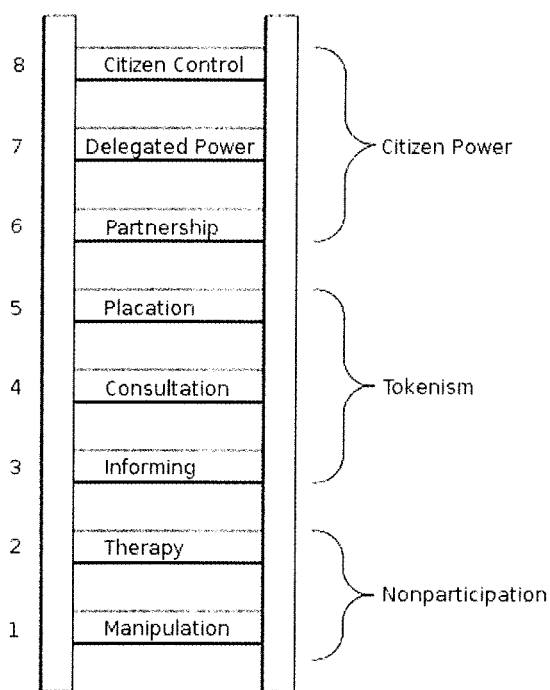


Figure 2.1: Arnstein's (1969: 217) Ladder of citizen participation.⁹

The model clearly identified the levels at which Arnstein believed actual participation could occur; essentially these comprised situations in which people could be in control of and/or contribute equally to outcomes. Non-participation and tokenism, in Arnstein's model, presents problems for many institutions that believe consultation and

⁹ See Table 7E, Chapter 7 for an application of these layers to the analysis of case study research.

information giving, and even therapy (via the wellness discourse), constitutes authentic participatory practices. Of particular concern is the consultative rhetoric, which was placed at the tokenistic level in Arnstein's ladder:

Inviting citizens' opinions, like informing them, can be a legitimate step towards their full participation. But if consulting them is not combined with other modes of participation, this rung of the ladder is still a sham since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account ... When power holders restrict the input of citizens' ideas solely to this level, participation remains just a window dressing ritual ... what citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have participated in participation (Arnstein, 1969: 219).

The 'consultative' rung is the subject of considerable controversy and contention, perhaps because it is seen as more achievable and thus attempted by a range of practitioners. Critics of Arnstein's interpretations of consultation have defended limitations of consultative practices as a reality of the modern democratic system.

Henderson (2003: website), for example, argued:

Community consultation is not about divesting planning power to a community but rather keeping an open mind with regard to legitimate community concerns about a proposal. In soliciting input and ideas about such a planning proposal it is about taking the time and effort to provide information and explanation back to those concerned communities.

Yet there are powerful arguments to support Arnstein's analysis, such as that provided by the World Bank (1996: website):

We fully support and advocate consultation and listening—especially with the poor and disadvantaged. But we do not equate this with the process called "participation." Instead, we recognize consultation and listening as essential *prerequisites* for participation, because, no matter how good the sponsors and designers are at consultation and listening, what is still missing is *learning* on the part of the people in the local system. A person who is being "listened to" or "consulted with" does not learn nearly as much as the person doing the listening and consulting.

Despite Henderson's criticisms, and his legitimate concern that consultation is used too frequently as merely an opinion gathering process, his interpretation was based on a form of representative power, one that is itself intrinsically hierarchical. This seems a pertinent issue for museums, and echoes Fleming's (2001) concerns about the hierarchical nature of cultural institutions. If museums seek the benefits of participation without fully analysing the implicit power structures embedded within the practice, therefore, the potential for genuinely beneficial community participation in museum outreach or other activities stands to be jeopardised because of a perceived lack of authenticity.

Arnstein's model has influenced scholars in a range of disciplines to create industry specific ladders of participation (Anderson, 2005; Arnstein, 1969; Marginson, 1993;

Pretty, 1995; Ross et al., 2002; White, 1996; Wilcox, 2004). These adapted ladders have recognised that the degree of participation is dependent on a range of factors that are also inherent in the community development and social inclusion discourse (White, 1996; Matarasso, 1997), including: age, education, financial background, gender, personal experience, sexual orientation, social and institutional hierarchy, and/or power relations.

The conceptual relevance of participation and community engagement was demonstrated at the 2005 International Conference on Engaging Communities (United Nations and Queensland Government, 2005) where over 2000 delegates from a wide range of disciplines and fields discussed the importance of participatory practices in the context of community engagement.¹⁰ Many of the participants at this conference drew on the *Declaration of Human Rights* to situate their discussions, listing trust, reciprocity and accountability as the fundamental principles of community engagement (Ramez Horta, 2005, Robinson, 2005). Coleman's (2005) ten point checklist for organisations intending to use technology for community engagement was specifically directed for those interested in e-democracy. Six of Coleman's points, however, are relevant for those developing community engagement projects in a variety of situations and can be paraphrased as:

- understanding the target audience and the intended aims for the project
- 'considering which tools, techniques and technologies best meet the needs of accountability, inclusion, transparency and flexibility'
- understanding how large amounts of information is dealt with
- outlining from the beginning how public input will be dealt with
- creating sustainable process that people can get used to
- integrating critical evaluation throughout the project (Coleman, 2005).

The draft United Nations Declaration on Community Engagement (another outcome of this conference) (Brisbane Declaration, 2005) outlined key definitions and considerations, and identified core principles of community engagement as integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence. Further, it called for recognition of community engagement as a two way process, as central to capacity building initiatives and the

¹⁰ See Appendix C for a copy of the *Museums and Community Engagement* poster developed for this conference and which was a direct result of this thesis.

pursuit of sustainability agendas and as an enterprise in which “Indigenous peoples and the poor and marginalized, are adequately resourced to participate meaningfully in the broader community” (Brisbane Declaration, 2005: 1-2).

Mutual interest, however, can be at once enabling and distracting: shared interest does not always translate to shared meaning or language. Different disciplines often replace the term participation with, or favour, other terminology, such as capacity building, collaboration, community consultation, community empowerment, community engagement, social inclusion and social capital. In the process of this substitution, the concept of participation can become discipline specific and thus somewhat diluted from the basic dictionary definition that denotes involvement and which emerges from the Latin verb *participatus* that translates as ‘made to share’ (Patton, 2005). Use of the participation rhetoric has been challenged by political scientists, such as Mayo (2003), Chandler (2001) and Ledwith (1997), who have charged neo-liberal states with high-jacking the terminology and creating a form of ‘pseudo participation’ (Mayo, 2003: 40) whilst maintaining control over the extent and type of participation available to workers/citizens. For these authors, an attempt to institutionalise participatory practices does not recognise the multifaceted context or conditions in which genuinely participatory practices evolve.

In this context, it is interesting to reflect on the emergence of a public participation discourse. Specialists in this field traverse a variety of disciplines but draw principally on terminology from the consultative milieu through which to frame their activities (Hardy, 2002; Rogers, 2002). The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed seven core values that it uses to advocate for integrating participatory practices into social, environmental and political sectors (IAP2 website, 2004). These clearly articulated principles are fundamental to the pursuit of participatory practices, and build on the notion of negotiated inclusion, and shared processes and information. The principles comprise:

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. The public participation process communicates the interests and meets the process needs of all participants.
4. The public participation process seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected.
5. The public participation process involves participants in defining how they participate.
6. The public participation process provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. The public participation process communicates to participants how their input affected the decision (IAP2 2005: website)

A toolbox of participatory techniques and methodologies to help practitioners share information, compile input and provide feedback and bring people together is also a feature of IAP2 practice. Many of the information sharing tools are already utilised by museums, particularly the websites, as noted by Sumption (2002), printed information, use of information repositories like libraries etc and technical reports. Similarly, some of the feedback techniques have also been integrated into museum work in the form of evaluation, such as surveys, focus groups and interviews. The use of community-based facilitators is highlighted in this section, and while it notes the benefits of this approach it warns practitioners to be mindful of building false expectations. The section outlining techniques used to bring people together include the 'open house' approach, which is akin to a museum. However, it also identifies activities that could occur within that setting, including 'design charrettes' in which participants creatively re-design project features (IAP2, 2005: website Public Participation Toolbox).

IAP2 has developed its own participatory spectrum to help manage and understand degrees of participation (see Figure 2.2). The spectrum, like Arnstein's model, differentiates between informing and consulting approaches and those of collaborating and empowering. A goal for museums working with communities could be to aspire to practice the collaborative stream. This recognises problems inherent in handing over decision making to the public in relation to cultural heritage and significance, and funding and budgets, but values the collaborative dimensions of cultural heritage management for ongoing industry sustainability.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fact sheets ● Web sites ● Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public comment ● Focus groups ● Surveys ● Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops ● Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen Advisory Committees ● Consensus-building ● Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen juries ● Ballots ● Delegated decisions

Figure 2.2: The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum acknowledges the different goals, promises and methods inherent in the participatory process (IAP2, 2005: website).¹¹

Much of IAP2 work, however, is conducted on a consultancy basis, and as such, remains on the periphery of social, political and economic governance. One could argue, like Mayo (2003) and Chandler (2001), therefore, that this form of controlled participatory behaviour, is one that is dependent upon allocated resources, is thus the antithesis of the participatory worldview and contrary to participatory principles advocated in a range of disciplines and discourses.

Many of these participatory principles are present in the foundation of different disciplinary terminologies and applications, and it is through these principles that one can determine the fundamental attributes and values that comprise the participatory worldview: citizenship and democracy; decision-making and deliberation;

¹¹ The IAP2 spectrum is applied in the analysis of research findings in Chapters 7 and 8 – see Table 7G and 8D.

empowerment and inclusion; learning and legitimacy; reciprocity and trust. This philosophy is underpinned by a common factor: people involved in processes and decision making; and, although advocates of environmental democracy have argued that the participatory process needs to expand to represent a 'green' perspective (Eckersly, 1992, 1997), participation typically involves multiple stakeholders, groups or individuals, private and public, in the process of events, decision-making or deciphering of results in order to bring about change.

2.3.1 Natural resource management extension and participatory practices

As the minor and major case studies in this thesis examine participatory museum projects with a natural resource management (NRM) and place based focus, it is useful to examine how other NRM providers address the issue of participation. Agricultural extension, which is akin to museum outreach, is a major vehicle for participatory practices and discourse, and in Australia comprises information dissemination, hands-on projects and field trials as well as incorporating participatory community-based programs such as Landcare, Bushcare and Greening Australia. For many in this NRM arena the notion of participation has become so fashionable that it has been adopted almost universally (Pretty, 1995). This means, according to Pretty (1995), that the concept has also been used indiscriminately to the point where people are often asked to participate in activities for participation's sake. This reflects Arnstein's critique of the consultative rung on her ladder: the development of genuine participatory exercises and experiences is infinitely more complex than the consultative compromise. Pretty (1995) modified Arnstein's ladder to develop a model for participation in development programs and projects, and which was applicable to both agricultural and social sustainability contexts. He noted the importance of local context for decision making and participatory practices, and highlighted learning as a central feature of the participatory process. His analysis also engaged with the issue of trustworthiness within the participatory process, and considered participation in relation to the degree of change that occurred when people participate in a project.

Another useful model from the NRM extension arena is the typology of public participation developed by Ross et al. (2002). They rejected the ladder analogy devised by Arnstein for its inability to represent the diverse and complex nature of participatory

practices and community engagement tools already practiced in the NRM arena. Participation was not fundamentally about power transfer, they argued, rather it was about challenging existing power structures that needed to change (Ross et al., 2002). As such, they developed a typology of participation for two reasons:

- To describe a palette of activities in Australia delineating the diversity of possibilities, and
- To focus on specific consideration for requirement for each type, and on strengths and weaknesses, to help initiators of participatory processes to consider critical issues and the specifics of their contexts in their work (Ross et al., 2002: 206)

The four tiered model advocated by Ross et al. (2002) incorporated types of activities and their characteristics as well as tangible examples and advice (see Appendix B). It is a useful spectrum via which to consider participatory practices within the museum industry because it provides for variables and diversity. The significance of the participatory process in this model is embedded in the way activities are designed as well as in terms of the outcomes they deliver. Of particular interest is the authors' understanding of consultancy: the distinction between consultation and negotiation is highlighted, and negotiation is seen as an activity that requires shared decision making. In addition, the discussion of stakeholder based planning is similarly important, particularly for government led projects.

Aslin & Brown (2004) developed a community engagement toolkit for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission which contains guidelines that have relevance for the museum industry. The research presented community engagement principles, processes and tools in an accessible format. Of interest are the models and diagrams that illustrate the principles and practice of community engagement (see Figures 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5). These guidelines highlight the values implicit in participatory practices. They act as a checklist for helping practitioners ensure due respect, inclusion, flexibility and reciprocity, as well as an understanding and consideration of time, are integrated into engagement planning processes.

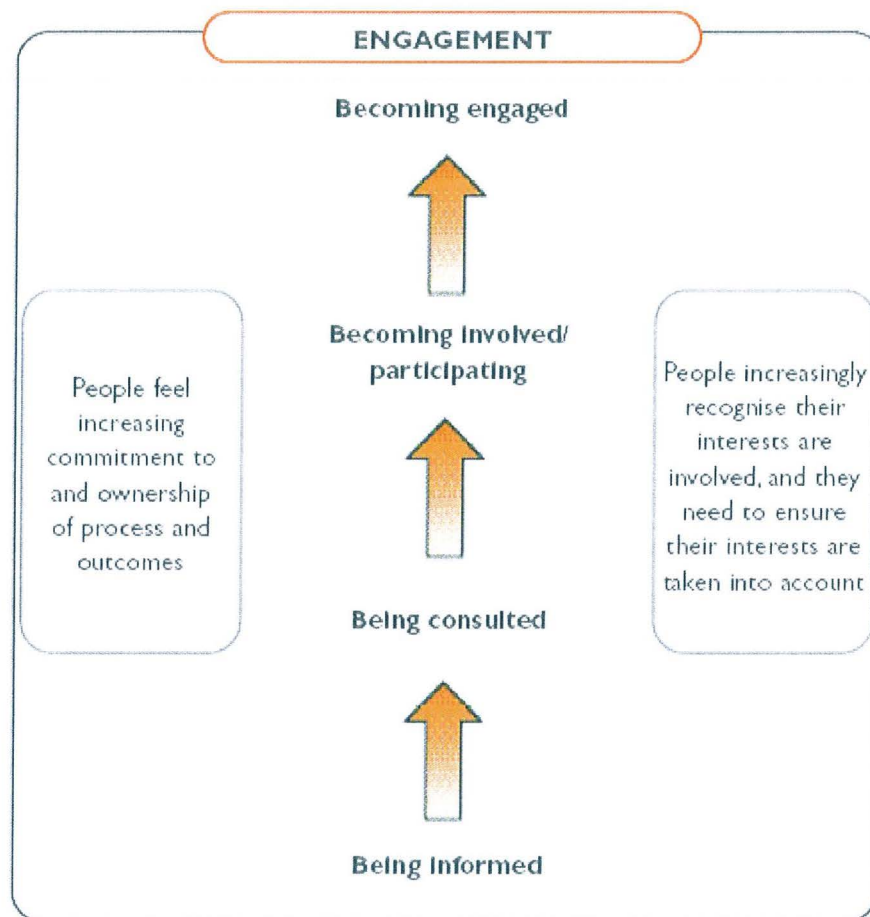


Figure 2.3: Aslin's & Brown's (2004: 5) engagement model illustrates the difference between information, consultation, participation and engagement.

Aslin & Brown (2004) challenged the idea that participation itself is transformative, and focussed instead on the notion of engagement. For them, participation was an ingredient of being engaged but did not signify engagement itself. This is an area for ongoing debate – from a personal perspective, I would argue that cognitive engagement leads to agency and participation. This discrepancy is an interesting illustration of two different learning and motivational personalities. That is, some people think first and act later, while others do the reverse.

PRINCIPLES 'What should be'	
MDBC values	Principles of engagement
COURAGE	<p>MANDATE FOR CHANGE: recognise and act on a mandate for change – involvement in transformations not just transactions</p> <p>AGREED VALUES: apply Murray-Darling Basin Commission values in all internal and external engagement – 'walk the talk'</p>
INCLUSIVENESS	EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: recognise that communication patterns need to take the form of a network or web – neither top-down nor bottom up, nor within closed circles, but to and from many sources within a system
COMMITMENT	SHARED VISION: shared commitment to a vision for a more sustainable Basin made explicit in each engagement process – reality, as well as rhetoric
RESPECT & HONESTY	REPRESENTATIVENESS: as many interests as possible given respect and acknowledgement, and represented appropriately – whole system approaches, not fragmentation and division
FLEXIBILITY	MUTUAL LEARNING: generate fresh ideas and solutions through mutual exchange of ideas – dialogue as well as discussion and debate
PRACTICABILITY	LONG-TERM GOALS: accept that engagement goals are both here-and-now and future-oriented – they have both 'roots' and 'wings'
MUTUAL OBLIGATION	NEGOTIATION, COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION: engagement processes based on partners' shared responsibility and accountability – collaboration and cooperation, not competition and division
QUESTIONS What do you think of these principles? Are they relevant and useful? How would you modify them?	

Figure 2.4: "Principles of community engagement" (Aslin & Brown, 2004: 17).¹²

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES	
1. Act for change	Accept that aim of engagement process is not to maintain the status quo or accept the 'lowest common denominator' but to make a difference in the right direction. Base processes on accepting that things need to change and that old ways of doing things can't continue.
2. Agree on values	'Walk the talk'. Try to apply the values yourself and set an example to others.
3. Effective communication	Try to open up communication and talk to others outside the 'club' and the 'circle'. Try to engage a wider group of people and move away from relying on the same group of people you know (the 'usual suspects').
4. Develop and commit to a shared vision	Establish common ground in the form of a shared vision to guide engagement processes and help ensure they are working towards an agreed goal. Make a commitment to achieve that vision yourself, and try to get others to make a commitment as well.
5. Representativeness	When selecting people from interest groups, try to get people who are not just representing personal views but who will try to represent a wider constituency. Where possible, try to get people elected to represent interest groups and who will report back to their groups and seek their views, not those who are self-nominated or 'tall poppies'.
6. Accept that mutual learning is needed	Accept that no-one has all the answers and everyone has something to learn, including you. Be prepared to step back from your position and listen to others.
7. Work towards long-term goals	Accept that it may take a long time to achieve goals and try not to get discouraged by slow progress. Bear in mind that we have to work from the here and now, and we can only act in the present even if the goal is a long way in the future.
8. Base processes on negotiation, cooperation and collaboration	Don't come in with prescribed answers and outcomes, be prepared to negotiate and work with others towards mutually agreeable solutions.

Figure 2.5: Applying the principles of community engagement (Aslin & Brown, 2004: 13).

¹² These principles are adapted and extended in the research results analysis Chapters 7 and 8 – see Table 7C.

The development of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) discourse has also influenced the way NRM practitioners utilise public participation. Its relationship sustainability advocated for in the *Bruntland Report* (Bruntland (ed), 1987) and at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992) has meant that environmental management has been integrated into legal frameworks (Slootweg et al., 2001). Public participation in NRM activities is now an accepted component of planning and process. The methodology for undertaking these types of assessments is, as suggested above, largely contingent on the local context. Slootweg et al. (2001), however, reflected that integrated social impact assessment (SIA) and EIA identified empowerment processes as one of the processes inherent in social change activities that need to be considered in interventionist programs and research.

Other NRM extension workers have examined and modified participatory models in an attempt to improve farming practices and promote community engagement in restorative land management activities. Like museums, some NRM practitioners have sought to use storytelling and photography as a way to engage communities to create a better understanding of land management and usage. These practices reflect Vancley's (1995, 2004) acknowledgment of the importance of social aspects of agriculture. Oral history and sense of place methodologies and discourse have become important ingredients in understanding a more holistic value of place that incorporates tangible and intangible cultural heritage and spirituality as well as traditional scientific and economic significance (Read, 1996, 2000; Seddon, 1972; Stedman, 2003). A number of projects have emerged from the NRM sector that have explored how people feel about landscapes and change, including a project in the Avon River, Western Australia, which used photography and stories and resulted in a booklet called *Reflections on the Avon* (Moore, 2002). Other researchers have used oral history to create an understanding of place attachment and identity (Lane, 1997; Lucas, 2004), and projects like *Listening to the Lachlan* (Roberts and Sainty, 1996) have used social history methodologies to develop an understanding of environmental change in specific places.

2.3.2 Community cultural development, cultural heritage industries and participatory practices

Other arenas that particularly resonate with museum work in its use of culture to evoke participation and contribute to community capacity are the field of heritage and community cultural development (CCD). CCD practitioners develop cultural responses to social conditions and integrate the arts and culture with social well-being. Adams & Goldbard (2002: 61) believed that CCD activities help “participants come to an awareness of their own power as culture makers and employ that power to solve problems and address issues of deep concern to themselves and their communities”. Implicit in this is a sense of active engagement, one that echoes transformative learning practices. In this model, learning by creating is a form of learning by doing: both are contingent upon active participation in an activity.

There has been significant research into the motivations for people to participate in arts based activities over the decade. McCarthy & Jinnet (2001), Matarasso (1996, 1997, 2000) and Williams (1995) have all examined the extent to which people participate in the arts, and, to a degree, how this contributes to social capital and inclusion. Much of this literature, however, has addressed the extent to which public participation in arts industries bolsters the arts industry itself, and reflects the significant audience-based research that has emerged in the museum arena during this time (Bennett, 1994; Bennett & Frow, 1991; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Gaulding, 1991; McManus, 1991; Silverman, 1995).

Thus engagement strategies have been, in part, to get people through the door in order to fulfil the increasing accountability requirements faced by many cultural institutions. Scott’s (2003, 2004) research into museums and social impact specifically challenged this approach; she called for increased qualitative and longitudinal studies to improve understandings about the impact of arts activities and greater substantiation of material presently collected. Her museum specific studies focused more on the broad picture of providing evidence for institutional relevance than an examination of community engagement techniques and practices. Nonetheless, Scott’s work provides an umbrella framework for the methodological approach used in this thesis: her list of suggestions, including adapted evaluation methodologies, aimed to integrate a better understanding of the value of museum based activities:

- The need to plan with long term impact in mind;
- The need for common definitions to underpin impact assessment;
- The need for more robust methodologies and valid evidence;
- The need to use both quantitative and qualitative data;
- The standardisation of methodologies across the sector to enable comparisons;
- The need for more in depth evaluations to increase understanding about project processes and factors influencing successful outcomes and best practice; and
- The need for longitudinal research to assess both the sustainability of interventions and outcomes (Scott, 2004: 8).

Other CCD practitioners have specifically challenged cultural agencies and government to adopt a broader framework in which to consider the value of arts based activities and values. Hawkes (2001, 2003) specifically critiqued government policies that utilise the triple bottom line framework, devised by Elkington (1997), and that has been adopted by governments to guide their sustainability initiatives. Hawkes (2003) argued that this ignored the value and contribution of culture to public life and he advocated for a fourth cultural pillar of sustainability which integrated an appreciation of cultural diversity. He devised an analytical model for engagement in the creative industries that drew distinction between creative participation and creative reception (see Figure 2.6):

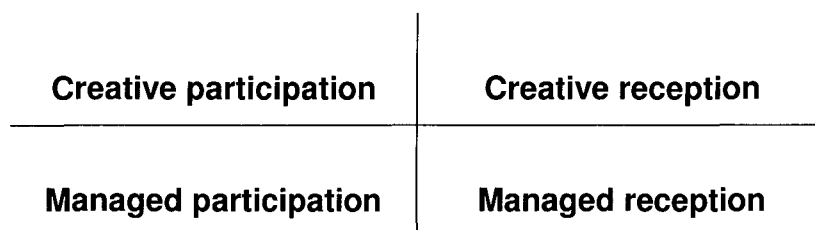


Figure 2.6: Different types of creativity generates different types of participation (Hawkes, 2003).

This model reflects the split definition of participation developed by the Cultural Ministers Council Report (2003: 18) in the social impacts of participation in the arts and cultural activities:

Creative participation is defined as 'participation associated with making, creating, organising, initiating, producing, facilitating arts activities and indicates active engagement. Also included are intermediary, supply and enabling participation (e.g. film distribution, theatre management, curatorial activities, supportive involvement of family). No value judgement is applied to the quality or outcome of the artistic expression, rather the emphasis is on the act of being creatively engaged.' (Cultural Ministers Council, Statistics Working Group 2003:4). It is not clear whether this very broad definition is used internationally.

Receptive participation is defined as 'participation that involves receiving (watching, purchasing etc.) a culture or leisure event or product. Included is participation that uses, purchases or observes a culture or leisure product or event.' (Cultural Ministers Council, Statistics Working Group 2003:4).

Hawkes also made a distinction between doing and seeing in a creative context (see Figure 2.7). This perspective that meets the critical dimension of this thesis in its recognition of the difference between audience and creative contributors to museum projects and which highlights the learning by doing aspect of the transformative education.

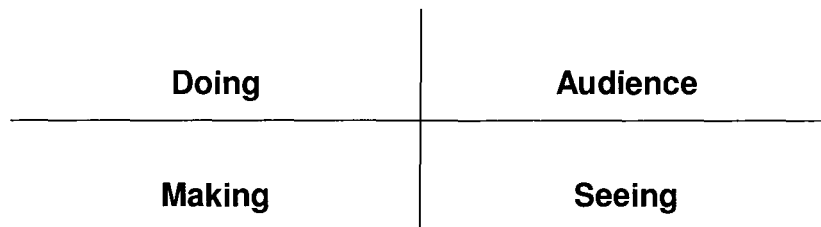


Figure 2.7: The difference between doing and seeing (Hawkes, 2003).

In a review of how interpersonal and cultural backgrounds and experiences influence the way people interact, Krempl (2002: 1) suggested that a social system that combines the personal and managerial needs to be developed. Krempl analysed society on that basis of what she termed 'First and Third Person systems', and, while recognising the worth of each individually, believed power and potential lay in bringing them together (see Figure 2.8).

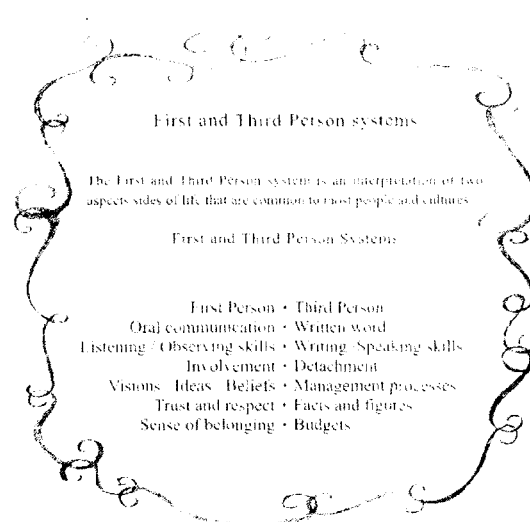


Figure 2.8: First and Third Person systems (Kremp, 2002: 30).

To do this Kremp (2002) argued that a better understanding of what constitutes community spirit was required, and she identified five dimensions which she believed were integral: urban structures, visible artistic expressions, physical natural environments, identity and universal consciousness. Kremp (2002) believed that in order to understand the impact and importance of community projects, people need to

reflect on the long-term benefits of storytelling and its ability to generate community spirit. She also identified a need to integrate structural approaches to program evaluation (such as performance measures and visitor numbers) with personal and creative expressions can give both institutions and communities a sense of the benefit that these projects can engender. These, as well as the practice of participant observation, are discussed in more detail in the following chapter that outlines this thesis' methodology.

In terms of public participation, heritage management (historic buildings and heritage sites) has an interesting history. In Australia and America it is linked to the public history movement that has seen authors such as Davison (1991), Griffiths (1996, 2002), McConville (1991) and Archibald (1999, 2004) advocate for community involvement in local and environmental histories. In a participatory sense, the cultural heritage arena is re-emerging as an important player – although it should be noted that in England the word culture is used in preference to heritage due to the conservative connotations associated with the term heritage (Hewison & Holden, 2004).

As mentioned above, agencies such as ICCROM and UNESCO integrate participatory discourse directly into their curriculum. Influential protocols, including *The Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS, 1999) have also responded to demands to integrate community into heritage management and planning. In the 1999 Charter revision, the concept of community is conveyed through the term 'association' yet incorporates a better sense of social value throughout the document. Significantly, participation is directly mentioned in Articles 12 and 26.2 which clarify and address "the need to consult and involve people" as part of the heritage process (Australia ICOMOS, 1999: 22). More explicit, is Corsane's (2005) model for the museum and heritage work, which clearly illustrates the potential for participation throughout the process (see Figure 2.9 next page).

In addition, cultural impact assessment (CIA), which according to Sloodweg et al. (2001) and Vanclay (2004) forms part of SIA, is also developing in relation to participatory practices. Like Hawkes' advocacy for a cultural pillar of sustainability, Sagina (2003, 2004) argued that CIA is fundamental to anticipating and managing development of heritage sites and values, many of which include 'intangible heritage'

and thus require a different system of management. Further, the cultural heritage industry and CIA grapple with the concept of cultural landscapes, defined (by heritage practitioners) as landscapes that:

present a cumulative record of human activity and land use in the landscape, and ... offer insight into the values, ideals and philosophies of the communities forming them, and of their relationship to that place (Pearson and Sullivan, 1995: 32).

For the museum industry, this concept has particular relevance in relation to ecomuseums and is discussed in more detail below.

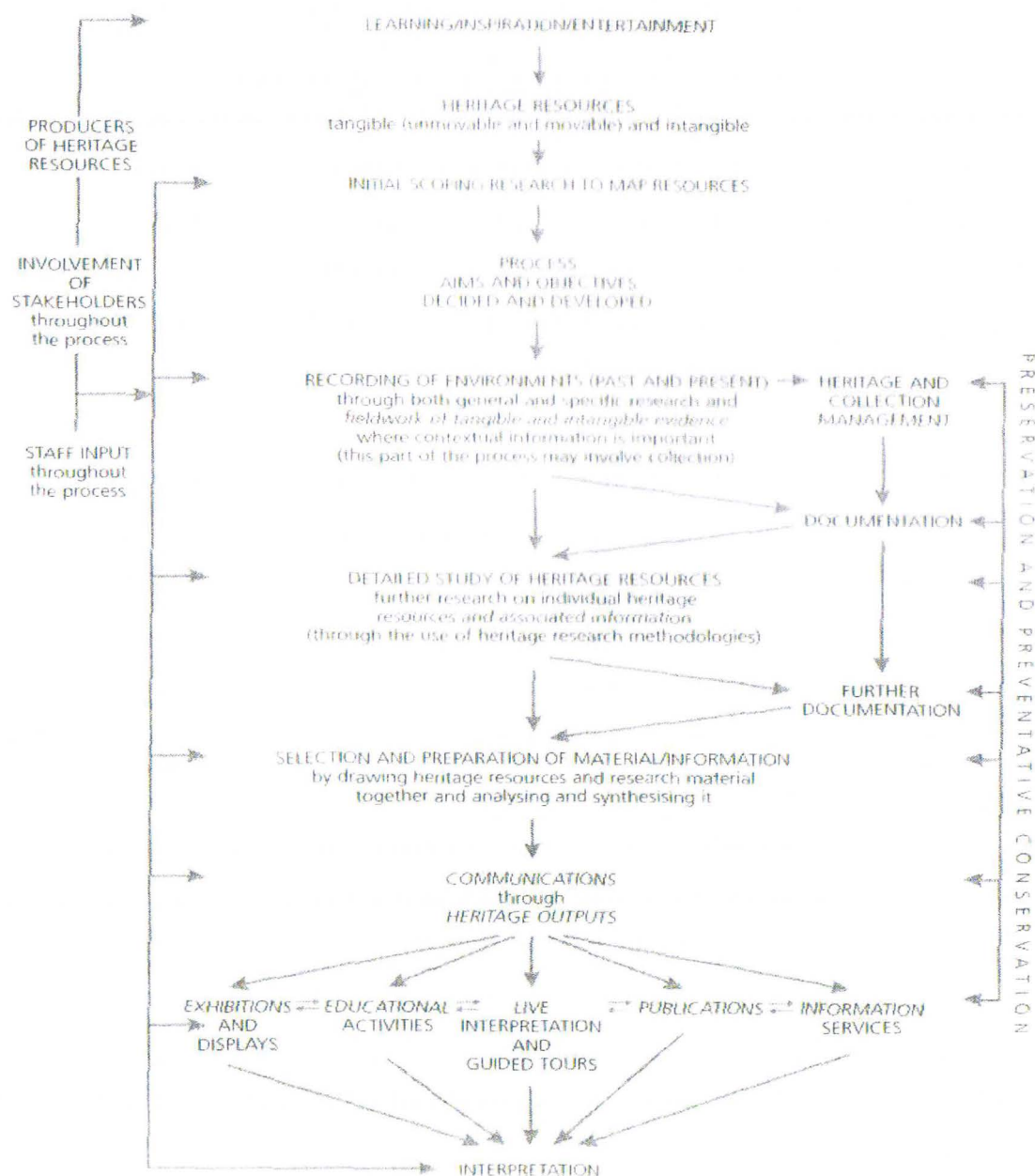


Figure 2.9: Corsane's model of the overall process of heritage/museum/gallery work (Corsane, 2005: 3).

2.3.3 Community development, community health and participatory practices

Models for community engagement have been framed specifically for the community development arena, and are linked with the Human Rights discourse and the work of the United Nations, particularly in their pursuit of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2005). In this context, however, it is important to recognise property rights and access to an equal playing field as crucial components of the participatory state – that is, if there is no equality in the basic make-up of society, then community capacity to participate is seriously compromised. Imbalance at this level means that it is impossible to discuss democratic participatory principles without referring to specific national contexts: there is a distinction about the way western democracies approach the concept of community engagement for democratic purposes and those issues that are prevalent in the community development arena, particularly for third world countries (Sobhan, 2005). As such, while this dissertation recognises the importance of the issues of social sustainability and poverty to a global sustainability discourse, they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Krempl's (2002) discussion, however, reflected connections between the CCD and community health sector, and contributes to the emerging discourse that links the cultural heritage and creative industries to wellbeing and mental health and which affects community development (Mills & Brown, 2004; Effective Change Pty Ltd, 2002; Campaign for Learning in Museums & Galleries, c.2004). In this arena, wellbeing is not limited to the individual or biological health. Rather, it regards social health as a holistic concept that incorporates: ecologically sustainable development, public housing, rural revitalisation, community strengthening, active citizenship, social inclusion and cultural diversity (Mills & Brown, 2004). The inclusion of environment in this list is important for this research and Mills & Brown's (2004) discussion of projects developed by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission underpins the relevance of attempting to address such issues in a museum and cultural heritage context, and for museums to use cultural heritage and material culture to tackle socio-environmental problems.

Merging interests between discourses is possible by using arts based tools and methodologies to address social, environmental and health based issues. Of these tools,

storytelling and photography have been particularly useful to the health (and other industries) as a method for engaging communities and creating social change (Wang and Burris, 1994, 1997; Tregonning, nd; Wu et al., 1995; Larson et al., 2001). Combining photography and personal stories with community development is an approach known as 'Photovoice', one that resonates strongly with the major case study in this thesis, *Basin Bytes* (Wills et al., 2004) and which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter on research methodology.

These initiatives are crucial to the work in this thesis: they at once provide a theoretical and applied rationale for the ensuing research. They also illustrate the use of participatory approaches across a number of disciplines and thus reflect the multi-faceted use of the term and concept of participation in social research.

2.4 The evolution of participatory practices in museums: museological revolutions

As interdisciplinary institutions, museums share the dilemmas of defining participation and settling on terminology that embodies the full spectrum of participatory principles and practices that occur within the industry. Further, changes to the fundamental nature and activities within the museum industry have made an impact on the way museums are perceived as relevant social institutions in all their diversity.

In an assessment of the museum field and its evolution, Van Mensch (1995, 2003) identified two crucial periods that impacted substantially on the development of museums. During these 'museum revolutions' museological thinking responded to both practical and theoretical change. Van Mensch's principal concern was to trace the development and impact of the discipline of museology on the museum arena. His first museum revolution, which took place between 1880-1920, incorporated:

The ... 'museum modernization movement' ... [in which] many of the practical problems are shared by all kinds of museums. New concepts were introduced in connection with a strong educational orientation in museum work. New ideas concerning the concept of museums brought about an increasing interest in an umbrella discipline ... Although the changes resulted from the synergy of the discussions on practical, theoretical and critical levels the emphasis was on practical museum work (Van Mensch, 1995: 3).

The second museum revolution Van Mensch (1995) identified occurred in the period between 1960 and 1980. The principal concern at this juncture was to situate museums in relation to their social and political context. During this critical period of industry reorienting and re-imaging, the term 'New Museology' emerged. New Museology aimed to bring museums in closer contact with their constituent communities. Rather than a single movement, however, Van Mensch identified three instances in which the term New Museology was used:

The term 'New Museology' was first introduced (without much effect) in the United States at the end of the 1950s when the concept of the museum as educational institution was brought to life again. The second time was at the end of the 1970s when in France the social role of museums was re-defined by a new generation of progressive museologists. Finally, at the end of the 1980s the term appeared in the United Kingdom in connection with a re-assessment of the educational and social role of museums in the post-war period (Van Mensch, 1995: 4)

Van Mensch's (1995, 2003) research has at once succinctly summarised key museum movements and theories whilst advocating for the recognition of museology as a legitimate discipline. His 'revolutionary' periods, which are in essence modernist and post modernist, are a useful framework via which to discuss the development of

museums and their relationship to participatory principles. The process of identifying participatory principles and practices in the museum arena, such as access, inclusion, diversity and community, however, necessitates integrating two additional 'revolutionary' periods into this discussion. The post Renaissance and Enlightenment eras were, in a European context, periods of significant social and political change. Thus locating museums in relation to the development of democracy and the reordering of knowledge becomes an essential component of this discussion. Further, the impact of technology from the 1990s onwards, including the emergence of the Internet, computer databases and multimedia, has significantly influenced museum management and practices. In addition, visitor research has expanded rapidly during this period, as have evaluation and interpretive methods. This discussion of museum context, therefore, is divided into four 'revolutionary' periods, outlined below.

2.4.1 The pre revolutionary period: democracy, museums and the Enlightenment

The British Museum's Enlightenment Gallery is a useful example with which to link the public museum and democratic society: the British Museum Act was passed in 1753 in the midst of the Enlightenment period (British Museum, 2003). Opened in December 2003, *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the 18th Century* was produced to celebrate the British Museum's 250th anniversary. Hailed as a provocative and unprecedented exhibition in which the British Museum "makes its own history its inquiry" (Jones, 2003: website), McKenzie (2004: website) noted:

What seems critical about this exhibition is the manner and method by which it brings the Enlightenment into focus as a generic force and influence which has itself conditioned the subsequent development of 20th century culture ... Only now, with the emergence of ideas of 'postmodernism', ... has modernism itself had to be authentically re-substantiated as an ongoing process of diversification.

Bennett (1995, 2004) Hooper-Greenhill (2004) and Preziosi (2004) have all situated the museum in relation to the Enlightenment and the notion of cultural governance. Indeed, Bennett (1995: 19) argued that the development of public museums should be considered "in the light of a more general set of developments through which culture, in coming to be thought of as useful for governing, was fashioned as a vehicle for the exercise of new forms of power."

Bennett (1995) drew on Habermas (1989) to suggest these changed social conditions required rethinking the relationships between 'different spheres of social and political life'. He and others, for example Hooper-Greenhill (1992) and Sherman & Rogoff (1994), also used a Foucauldian approach to analyse the different power relationships that were implicit in this social change, including the reordering of knowledge, and how it impacted on museum work. In Bennett's analysis, the cultural sector was, and remains, one of the spheres in which social power is negotiated and exhibited. Preziosi (2004) concurred with this interpretation, adding that the reordering of knowledge that emerged from this new socio-political order changed the way diverse publics viewed and interpreted material culture. Witcomb (2003), however, critiqued Bennett's analysis of public museums being embedded in power relationships and controlled cultural governance as too totalising. While museologists need to recognise governments' social reform agenda, she argued (and used Hussien's example of the Russian Revolution and the associated call to eliminate the past to demonstrate the influence of politics on the cultural sphere), popular culture emerged and developed outside of the government controlled sphere.

Democratising the cultural sphere in the context of museum work meant making collections more accessible (physically and intellectually) to the broader public, such as opening up the Sloane Collection in what became known as the British Museum in 1759 (Fisher, 2004). Opening up private collections did not necessarily make them immediately meaningful to the public (Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 2004; Cameron, 1971). The manner in which material was displayed and organised imposed a set of meanings and relationships that only those with similar education or experience could decipher. Thus, while the notion of universal access is a fundamental principle to emerge from the Enlightenment period, and one that has had a direct impact on museums, it cannot be considered in isolation.

Access, therefore, also required considering how people understand material culture exhibitions and, as such, the emergence of public museums is inherently linked to ideas of education. There is a difference, however, between the education of individuals and citizens in newly formed democracies (Bennett, 1995). Preziosi (2004) drew on the 1806 writings of French archaeologist Alexandre Lenoir to discuss the dual function of museums as vehicles through which to promote the 'power and splendour' of the state,

and as pedagogical institutions. In a reflection on the Enlightenment origins of museums, he described them as encyclopaedic institutions with “explicitly political uses in order to (re)educate a newly democratised citizenry” (Preziosi, 2004: 75). This re-education required an understanding of what knowledge was needed and, indeed, who had it in order to disseminate it, and thus drew on the notion of curatorial knowledge and authority.

‘Enlightened’ ways of looking at material saw museum curators using rational epistemic structures to organise exhibits that offered the public opportunities for self education via the acquisition of factual information (Bennett, 2004). Bennett (2004: 2) extended his discussion from his 1995 publication to consider the “evolutionary principles of classification and exhibition [that] developed in the new museums of natural history, ethnology and geology which flourished in the closing decades of the nineteenth century”. This, he argued, had two dimensions: one in which museums functioned as disciplinary laboratories; while the other focused on a new way of exhibiting public culture and thus developing a new form of cultural governance. Implicit in this, is the sense of organised knowledge taking precedence over experience (an approach that has been challenged by education theorists and museum learning practitioners, and which is discussed in more detail below). For Bennett (2004), assembling the ‘pasts beyond memory’ enabled museums to establish a form of epistemological and social superiority, one that, in essence, kept museum visitors at arms length from the collections and individual interpretations. Witcomb (2003) noted that Bennett’s (1995) interpretation of museums’ power relations saw them less as a destructive force and more as one for internal museum reform. She argued:

The calls for greater access and equity in representation are themselves a product of the tension between the rhetoric which sustains the notion of a public museum and its actual practice of representing the dominant class, race or gender (Witcomb, 2003: 16).

The British Museum’s Enlightenment Gallery can be viewed as a museological bridge between different collecting worlds and social worlds and mentalities. It showcases curios and antiquities in authentic glass display cabinets (Jones, 2003), the move from classical interpretations of the natural world and social order towards taxonomic research and chronological ordering of knowledge to denote evolutionary progress (Preziosi, 2004; Hooper Greenhill, 1992), and contextualises this shift in relation to, arguably, the most provocative social movement of the millennium. It provides museum workers with the chance for reflection, for review of the colonialist collecting policies

that allowed the removal of the Parthenon Marbles from Greece and which continue to cause such intense debate. It links the world of collecting and cultural governance to a changing society in which new forms of power, knowledge structure and governance were emerging, including a new form of cultural institution:

the new museum became ... a site for the staging of what subjects might be induced to desire as their patrimony: a place for the inciting, launching, and deployment of socio-historical longings and desires of all sorts (Preziosi, 2004: 76).

2.4.2 Education, professionalism and museum modernisation: the first museum revolution¹³

The educative function of the public museum in the 18th and 19th centuries, according to Bennett (1995) and Weil (1997; 2002), was that of public self improvement via exposure to socially acceptable mores, tastes and opinions. Although museums had also used objects in conjunction with schools groups, Hooper-Greenhill (1994) noted that the separation of museums from formal school-based education at the turn of the twentieth century also separated them from formal educational theory. This meant that museum educational activity remained static at a time when educationalists and psychologists, such as Dewey, Piaget and Vitosky (cited in: Dierking, 1996a, 1996b; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2001), were reconceptualising and evaluating the learning process. Maintaining this hierarchical approach to education and interpretation, therefore, also mean museums continued to develop meta narratives that used knowledge to construct and disseminate social, national and educational ideals (Bennett, 1995; Roberts, 1997).

Museums as fora for social regulation and refinement were also part of this period (Bennett, 1995). In this scenario, museums display techniques evolved from utilising taxonomic displays of specimens and rarities to one in which representation was used to 'manage' the public. Again, Witcomb (2003) acknowledged Bennett's perspective, but argued his analysis only catered for one type of community – citizens – and thus failed to recognise complex human relationships and communication patterns. Further, she argued that Bennett's view of the public museum did not accommodate the museum's relevance in popular culture and mainstream consumerism (Witcomb, 2003). In many ways, this left museums as somewhat two dimensional institutions. Witcomb's discussion, however, located the museum in a variety of different social settings and

¹³ Section 2.5.3 addresses the contemporary issue of museum learning in more detail.

spheres, including international fairs, department stores and on the international travel map. It seems clear that understanding the different social contexts for museums enables different sorts of cultural understandings and representations to develop, and different sorts of museums audiences and consumers to emerge.

This argument becomes clearer when one considers the development of different types of public museums, and the contrast between state and art museums, and local or community museums. Behind Dana's¹⁴ sharp critique of traditional museums as 'marble palaces filled with those so-called emblems of culture, — rare, costly and wonder-working objects' (Peniston, 1999: 38) was a belief that museums should be both useful and accountable to the community in which the museum was situated. Central to this usefulness, and Dana's blueprint for "new museums", was education, though he cautioned museums not to replicate formal school education. In his desire to rethink the essential purpose of museums, Dana produced a list of 16 "fundamental notes" which outline his recommendations for institutional change which are paraphrased below in Table 2.1 (Dana in Peniston, 1999).

No.	Fundamental note
1	Centralising authority and abstaining from board of directors.
2	Recognising the organic nature of museums and their methods, and advocating that museums developed without the use of a formalised plan.
3	Being wary of museum "experts".
4	Refraining from the over collection of oil paintings (which Dana believed reflected museum's irrelevance at the time).
5	Accepting all donations, gifts, and bequests, except when conditioned are attached.
6	Recognising the complimentary nature of museum education rather than using it to compete with schools.
7	Welcoming enthusiastic community collectors as collaborators rather than ridiculing them, as they will most likely become benefactors.
8	Recognising the "worth of a museum is in its use" (Peniston, 1999: 43).
9	Valuing active engagement or doing, rather than passive receiving or gazing.
10	Encouraging youth participation in museums.
11	Recognising art as "a result, not a cause" (Peniston, 1999: 43).
12	Allowing the production of art to remain without law.
13	Recognising that art producing mechanisms are not feasible.
14	Recognising that museums can only affect those they attract and therefore needs to represent a broad range of issues, run a variety of activities, be hospitable and be ready to follow visitor interests regardless of their status.
15	Understanding that good museum workers need a interpretive and teaching skills
16	Recognising the fundamental role advertising plays in contributing to public awareness of an institution's services (Peniston, 1999).

Table 2.1: John Cotton Dana's 16 fundamental notes outlining recommendations for institutional change (Peniston, 1999: 43).

¹⁴ John Cotton Dana was an influential American museologist – previously discussed in Section 2.1.

Current museum practice would challenge many of Dana's claims, particularly his negative remarks about museum planning (Fopp, 1997) and his wariness about 'museum experts' (Van Mensch, 2003). Indeed, advocates of the discipline of museology, another layer in the educative development of museums during this era, would dispute Dana's dismissal of the theory required to understand degrees of representation within the museum arena (Van Mensch, 2003). A number of Dana's notes, however, highlighted a shift in thinking about public museum practice, including his assertion that museums should identify and fit into community needs; that active engagement, not just passive receiving was fundamental to museum learning; that measuring the relevance of museums by assessing their use was crucial; and that communities should help "make" their museum (Peniston, 1999). Dana's call to measure museum relevance echoed other American museologists in the 1920s who advocated evaluation would bolster institutional accountability (Lawrence, 1991). Like education, however, evaluation during this time was conducted within behaviourist psychological parameters, and it was not until the 1970s that a shift towards more interpretive, constructivist evaluation techniques was integrated into museums (Lawrence, 1991).

Although collections and subject focused, museum workers gradually embraced a number of significant changes during this first revolutionary period. According to Van Mensch (2003: 3) these changes included:

the creation of the first national professional organisations ... the publication of the first professional journals ... the adoption of the first code of ethics ... and the establishment of the first professional training programs.

Indeed, these developments were the precursor to the formation of the International Council for Museums (ICOM) in 1946, and one can detect aspects of this new approach to museum work in the 1946 charter. ICOM developed a museum specific research agenda, a code of ethics to govern and guide museum practice, and as a body has constantly reassessed and redefined museums in relation to social developments and change (ICOM, 2004). Further, and significantly, 1948 saw the adoption and proclamation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in which cultural participation was specifically recognised: "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits" (United Nations, 1948: Article 27).

This period, therefore, challenged museum hierarchy by identifying education as a core museum function, and by professionalising museum governance. The emergence of museum bodies and a culture of museology or museography shifted the balance of power from being solely located in the collections to the process of governance and dissemination.

2.4.3 The New Museology: the second revolution

ICOM's definition of museums evolved between 1946 and 1973, but still centred on collecting and exhibiting activities. At the 10th General Assembly of ICOM in Grenoble in 1974, however, ICOM broadened the definition and scope of museum activities and:

placed a major emphasis on the potential role of museums in society, in education and cultural action, arguing that the traditional primary functions of museums should be seen as "first and foremost in the service of all mankind" and of a constantly changing society' (Boylan in Van Mensch, 1992: website).

Although some museologists, such as Hubert (1985), criticised the limited publicity that followed the Grenoble meeting, this new declaration moved museums into an arena of increased public accountability and social responsibility. These changes mirror socio-political developments: this period coincided with the beginning of the environmentalist movement: Rachael Carson published the influential *Silent Spring* in 1962, a decade later the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm and considered environmental problems in a global context. In an Australian museum context, the Piggott Report (Committee of Enquiry on Museums and National Collections, 1975) outlined a vision for the industry that clearly identified a place for people and the environment in the proposed new National Museum of Australia¹⁵ that went beyond the traditional natural science approach to focus on issues of an environmental nature.

These social changes also influenced the museum industry – for many museum workers, this paradigm shift can be succinctly described as the conflict between traditional, object focussed approaches to museum work, and contemporary people/community and interpretive approaches. This different approach to museum work was known collectively as the 'New Museology'. In general, people and intangible cultural history became as important as the traditional collection and documentation focus of museum

¹⁵ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4: Australian Museums.

work (Hauenschild, 1988; Mayrand, 1985; Vergo, 1989). Van Mensch (2003: 7) divided the New Museology movement into three different types: “community museology”, “the inclusive museum” [and] “lieux de memoire” (places of memory). These variances complicate the analysis of the New Museology, however, the three types share a number of common elements: placing the public and local community at the centre of museum work instead of the collection and reversing the traditional approach to disseminating knowledge (see Figure 2.10):

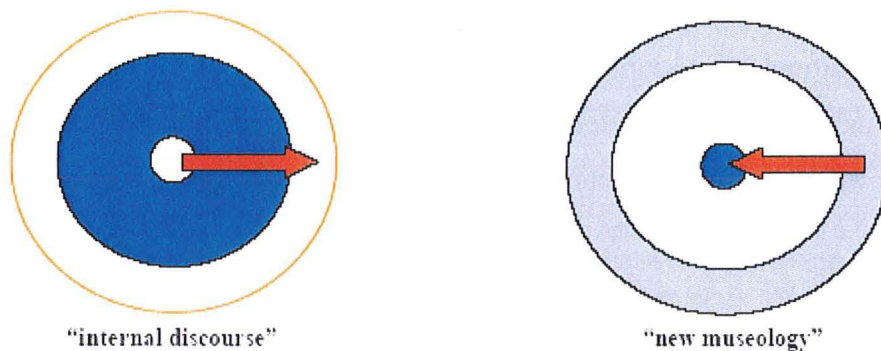


Figure 2.10: “Inside to outside”: differences in knowledge transfer techniques (Van Mensch, 2003: 7).

Essential in New Museology that emerged from France (1960s) and England (1980s), Van Mensch argued (2003), was the shifting focus from collections-based institutions to functions-based organisations in which the disciplinary-specific curator was no longer the central player and which recognised a myriad of “support disciplines” such as communications and education. Further, the social and political arena in which museums operated became central to museum identity. When Nobel (1971) speculated about the future directions for museums he identified race relations, ecology, drug abuse, poverty and warfare as social problems that emerged during the 1960s that had influenced museum practice. His ideas echoed the increased social and environmental awareness of the mid 1960s and early 1970s (AAMEC, 1971; Davis, 1996). For Noble, there were no longer any ivory towers in which to hide; he argued that museums needed to reflect the issues and changes in society not as reflections of the past, but as representative and inclusive of the present.

Noble’s perspective echoed the emerging critique of museum practice from French and Canadian museologists (including George Duclos, George Rivière, Hugues de Varine and René Rivard) who were interested in radically reviewing museum practices, and advocated for:

a global view of reality; research that satisfies social requirements; action that is continually adapted to a population and its territory; and an approach, research and actions that contribute to individual and social development" (Duclos et al. cited by Hauenschild, 1988: website).

From their discussions, the ecomusée (ecomuseum) emerged, (Davis, 1999, 2005; Rivière, 1985; de Varine, 1985; Hubert, 1985), a model in which communities took responsibility for the development of museums (an approach some museologists term community museology (Van Mensch, 2003; Mayrand, 1985). De Varine reconceptualised the work of museums, arguing "the museum, for us, is or rather should be one of the most highly perfected tools that society has available to prepare and accompany its own transformation" (de Varine cited by Hauenschild, 1988: website). In practical terms, this meant integrating diverse community voices in exhibitions and research, adopting a constructivist approach to object interpretation and museum learning, and promoting the museum as a contemporary institution. This bid for professional repositioning focused on incorporating a greater sense of community engagement, an approach they determined would help address the issue of the decreasing social standing and relevance of museums.

New Museology was also influenced substantially by British museologists. Vergo (1989) published a collection of essays that reconsidered museum work not as a collective attack on traditional practices but in the context of a re-examination of museums' role with society. What seems important, in this instance, is the integration of New Museology into the larger traditional museums, something that community museology clearly avoided. Vergo (1989: 3) defined the New Museology as:

as a state of widespread dissatisfaction with the 'old' museology, both within and outside the museum profession; ... what is wrong with the 'old' museology is that it is too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purposes of museums.

Like ecomuseologists, Sumarez Smith (1989) considered the interpretive dilemmas that occur when artefacts are removed from their original context. He believed museums needed to reconsider their conservation practices and integrate greater appreciation of the lifecycle of objects; explore and recognise the "spectrum" of display techniques available to assist the process of representation, and improve and re-establish museum scholarship in mainstream academia. Many of the contributors to Vergo's (1989) edited collection advocated for increased reflexive practices within the museum sector, a perspective Vergo highlighted in his discussion of exhibition development and making.

Whilst broadening the interpretive dimensions of museum practice, however, Vergo stopped short of integrating community voices into the interpretive domain.

The developments during this period point to a fundamental shift in museum practice. Many practitioners believed these new methods had the potential to rescue museums from a fate they saw as akin to being dubbed “living fossils” if their traditional object-focussed practices continued (Vergo, 1989). Van Mensch’s (2003) breakdown of different types of New Museology, however, illustrated that certain industry sectors were more able to integrate change than others. Thus community museums could respond to ecomuseology and community museology ideology that dismantled the hierarchy implicit in traditional museum governance. State museums, however, rearranged their internal structures but remained in control of the museum enterprise. For these types of larger museums, the New Museology radicalised the interpretive and representative potential of museum work without dismantling curatorial authority.

2.4.4 Audience, inclusion, sustainability and technology: a new revolution?

Since the development of the New Museology, museologists and museum workers have built upon and extended understandings about audience research, evaluation and learning (Dierking et al., 2004; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a, 1994b; Hein and Alexander, 1998; Hein, 1996; Scott, 1995; Silverman, 1995). Many of these ideas centre on the notion of museums working with their public. Bennett (1988) made an important distinction between museums ‘of’ the people and museums ‘for’ the people. This difference helps draw an important boundary between audience and represented communities, and as such, an extensive review of audience research literature is beyond the scope of this thesis. Further, Bennett’s concerns about the way different social classes are represented touch on one of the major concerns of this thesis: “for while what is shown in museums is important, the question of how museum’s artefacts get displayed and represented – and thus what they are made to mean – is at least as significant” (Bennett, 1988: 73). Representation, therefore, is a process of meaning making, a concept implicit in the work of Weil (1998) and Silverman (1995). The shifting relationship between the museum and visitors needed to be considered in relation to museums’ social relevance; the public was seen to have more control over museums because museums relied upon visitor numbers for survival. In addition, they

suggested that meaning making occurred during the museum visit as a complex form of information reception and processing, rather than during the production of displays and exhibitions.

At the turn of the 21st century the museum industry underwent a form of millennial musing in which both academics and museum workers speculated on the social relevance and role of museums (Delarge, 2001; Griffin, 2002; Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2001; Matarasso, 2000; American Association of Museums, 2002a; Weil, 2002). An increasingly competitive entertainment and leisure industry has begun to compete with museums for the public's recreational time. This bid to remain socially sustainable has been tempered by the increased financial pressures experienced by many museums although Scott (2002, 2003) has argued rigorously that museums need to be considered on more than just financial terms. To understand the social impact of museums, she suggested, greater measurement of the multi-stakeholder groups that interact with museums must be incorporated into institutional management practices. Scott's analysis drew on the work of cultural development analysts Williams (1995) and Matarasso (1997, 2000): Williams integrated research from the Australian CCD arena, while Matarasso worked from a UK perspective to comment on the value of arts-based participation.

Social and financial issues have not been the only challenges facing the museum industry. Museums have responded to the technological developments of the information age – computers, databases and the Internet have all significantly expanded collections management, interpretation and exhibition techniques (Dawson, 2002; MacDonald, 1992; Sumption, 2001; Witcomb, 2003). Further, and significantly, museum activities have been analysed in relation to the broader sustainability agenda in which social, economic and environmental representation, education and internal institutional policies sit side by side and demand greater consideration of the ways in which museums impact, influence and contribute to society. Social and political climates have necessitated an increased awareness of the social inclusion imperative, particularly in Britain, multiculturalism and diversity (Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Ellis, 2003, 2004; Sandell, 1998, 2002; Selwood, 2004). In 1995, for example, UNESCO's declaration on cultural diversity stated "development divorced from its human or

cultural context is growth without a soul” (UNESCO, 1995:), a position that underlined the importance of equal representation within the museum sector.

In addition, a number of museologists and groups have integrated the principles of ‘respect, equity, freedom and inclusion’ into the sustainability debate (American Association of Museums and Instituto Latinoamericano de Museologia, 1998; Worts, 1998). Canadian museologists Janes & Conaty (2005: 8) have argued that the temptations and pressures of running a popular museum “are so consumptive of staff and money that there is often little left of either to pursue other activities”. Their suggestions are based on a series of case studies from America, Canada and New Zealand, in which museums take time to build relationships with their constituent communities. In this, their methodology has resonance with the main thrust of this research as they assert:

idealism, intimacy, depth, and interconnectedness are not only the warp and weft of meaning, but are also the foundation for long-term sustainability ... [they] are the tests of genuineness and quality in a socially responsible museum, in contrast to the current preoccupation with attendance figures ... attendance flows from significance, and significance flows from the provision of meaning and value to ones community (Janes & Conaty, 2005: 8-9).

This call for reconsideration of these issues and principles is timely, particularly in relation to other emerging discourses, such as the Museums and Community Initiative, run by the American Association of Museums, the work of Robert Archibald (2000; 2004) and the social inclusion imperative that influences the work of many British museologists (Amdur Spitz & Thorn, 2003; Anderson, 2005; Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Matarasso, 2000; Newman, 2001, 2005; Newman, et al., 2005; Sandell, 2002).

2.5 Museums, communities and participatory practices: social inclusion, diversity, access and learning

How do museums work meaningfully with communities, and how is the word community meaningful to museums? Gurian (1996: website) outlined the potential for museums to integrate participatory paradigms into the very essence of their activities:

If we believe that congregant behaviour is a human need and that civic locations offer opportunities for people to be with and see other people, then why not challenge those institutions, not previously interested in communal activity, to build programs that encourage more civil interactions. If we do our work well, all members of society -- no matter what ethnic, racial, or economic group they belong to - could be made to feel welcome. In order to create such a safe environment we must look at the most subtle aspects of our presentations.

Understanding what is meant by 'community' is crucial. Karp (1992) linked the concept of communities to multiple identities, arguing that "for communities to exist in time and space, they must be imagined and represented by individuals as significant components of their identities" (1992: 21). He noted:

Every society can be seen as a constantly changing mosaic of multiple communities and organisations. Individual identities and experiences never derive entirely from single segments of society - from merely one of the communities out of which the complex and changing social order is made. (Karp, 1992: 3)

Gurian (1996) defined community in relation to:

the collective' in all its forms - organisations, families, neighbourhoods, and even ad hoc groups. While not always benign, such groups can, by repression, coercion, and fear, cause widespread violence and destruction), they nonetheless - and for better or worse - shape our lives and our society (Gurian, 1996: website)

The American Association of Museums examined a number of definitions of community during their Museums and Community Initiative, including Israeli sociologist Victor Azarya:

Community ... usually refers to (1) a group sharing a defined physical space or geographic area such as a neighbourhood, city village, or hamlet; [or] (2) a group sharing common traits, a sense of belonging, and/or maintaining social ties and interactions which shape it into a distinctive social entity, such as an ethnic, religious, academic or professional community (Azarya in American Association of Museums, 2002b: 74).

These definitions build on the complexities outlined by Wenger (1998); the communities of practice model is relevant when considering the types of communities that museums engage with in the course of their activities. For museum workers, understanding the dimensions and complications of the term 'community' is a complex business. Hein (2000) reflected on the notion of communities by adding an inclusive temporal dimension in a way that is not dissimilar to the National Museum of

Australia's mission statement "*Exploring the past, illuminating the present, and imagining the future*" (NMA, 2003). She discussed the implicit 'othering' of the term 'community' for museums, but suggested it was "not unreasonable to hope that broadened museum outreach can help existing communities come to a better understanding of themselves and one another" (Hein, 2000: 50).

For many museums, particularly state and national institutions, one very obvious link with communities is via outreach programs. These activities seek to involve diverse publics outside the physical realm of the museum and often outside the typical visitor profile, and can take a myriad of forms. *Museum Practice* (1996: 38) identified three types of outreach work and discussed these in the context of activities that were carried out with "audiences that have tended to be excluded ... from museums ... by a variety of barriers – physical, psychological, intellectual, social, cultural and financial": 'object-based' outreach, 'activity-based' outreach and 'information-based' outreach". Outreach, according to this discussion, can be linked particularly to the provision of activities in a social welfare capacity, but also as having a range of different purposes for museums, including: making collections more accessible, strengthening connections between collections and local communities, extending the educational role of museums and increasing visitor numbers.

Museum outreach has been particularly linked to reminiscence work with elderly citizens and oral history. Reminiscence work emerged as legitimate practice during the 1960, and literature in this field focuses on the role of objects and memory and the ability for material to stimulate creative and personal meaning making (*Museum Practice*, 1996b). Kavanagh (2000), for example, examined the context for memory in museums, drawing attention to shifts in historical focus and collecting paradigms. With the advent of new social history, collections started to include archives of miscellaneous and intangible cultural heritage that bring people to the forefront of interpretation. A good example of this is the development of the Australia's first oral history museum, Benga Oral History Centre in Dandenong, Victoria in the 1980s.

There is a distinction between the presence of oral history work and oral testimony, the latter being part of the process of provenance collection that challenged the collection of information from more conventional institutions and documentary material (Kavanagh,

2000). This reflects the interpretive approaches advocated by Tilden (1977) and Beck & Cable (2002). The point at which memories and reflections are collected, however, are also the point at which the story changes if one considers it is delivered in a particular context and then becomes institutionalised or museumised (Van Mensch, 2003) as it mingles with curatorial interpretation and institutional documentation. Rather than presenting private stories to the public domain, therefore, it becomes an interpretation of the private in a domain that is ordered by educational, flow path and design requirements. One needs to consider, thus, whether museums present the curator's creation or the communities? Can they present both? Integrating community perspectives and experiences, according to Kavanagh (2000), provided an opportunity to inject the museum experience with emotion, and to use this to enhance learning experiences.

Museum outreach activities that engage diverse communities and promote emotional engagement can potentially achieve social relevance, greater visitation, enhance interpretation of collection material and facilitate creative contributions to collection development. This connects to the notions of “idealism, intimacy, depth and interconnectedness” discussed by Janes & Conaty (2005: 8). The way larger institutions work with communities, however, is different from the models advocated by many of the new museologists. Witcomb (2003) discussed the tension between the political dimensions of community, which often place museums and communities in opposition. She suggested “that one way of avoiding romantic notions of community, while also recognizing that museums are engaged in dialogue would be to think of museums themselves as communities” (Witcomb 2003: 81). This analysis echoes the work of Perin (1992), who examined the relationships between museums and communities and found that there was often a one way process of communication from exhibit developers to communities or audiences. Perin (1992: 182) was concerned with the exhibition development process itself, and was interested to bring communities into “the communicative circle” – integrating communities in the process of development, whether by evaluation, review or collaboration.

Witcomb's (2003) analysis only briefly addressed the emergence of the New Museology in relation to the ecomuseum. This is not surprising: many contemporary museum scholars pay minimal attention to this movement, which reflects, perhaps, the

disparity between contemporary European approaches to museum work and those of America, Britain and Australia. Ecomuseums took the spotlight off collections by recognising communities as central to their purpose, but rather than banishing objects, they attempted to draw communities into a more broadly defined interpretive process and extend the usefulness of the museum to the local community.

Central to the ecomuseum ideal is the close involvement of local communities in the process of caring for their heritage so providing local people with the opportunity to conserve and exhibit the unique aspects of their locality. Traditional museums face many problems when attempting to encapsulate the special nature of places and in empowering local communities, ecomuseum philosophy and practice has provided a means of overcoming these ideological strictures" (Davies in Laffin, 1999: website).

Recognising the importance of contextual local space for 'living' objects, and multiple layers and temporal dimensions of interpretation was part of the ecomuseum (and New Museology) rhetoric. It is curious, when one considers the developments in American museology with regards to community engagement, that these ideas and issues are not incorporated more fully (Schaffer-Bacon et al., 1999, American Association of Museums, 2002a, 2002b; Archibald, 2000, 2004), with the exception of Fuller's discussion of the AK-Chin Indian Community Ecomuseum Project (Fuller, 1992), particularly considering the Smithsonian's neighbourhood museum concept featured at the Anacostia Museum. Canada, on the other hand, embraced the ecomuseum concept during the 1980s when the Musée et Centre Régional d'Interprétation de la Haute-Beauce opened (Rivard, 1999). Since this time, Canadian museologists, including Emery (2001), Worts (1998) and Janes & Conaty (2005) have considered the museums in relation to communities, indigenous issues and sustainability.

The previous section about museums during the Enlightenment period (2.4.1) discussed the relationship between museums and the notion of democracy. Much of the literature addressing this topic recognises diverse communities as legitimate recipients and consumers of museum products and information. In Bennett's (1996) analysis of museums' relationship to citizenship issues he argued that inclusive policies ought to govern the practices of museums. Museums with a sense of citizenship and democracy should, he stated: "portray the cultures of all sections of society; ... make themselves equally accessible to different ethnic groups, classes and genders; and ... their governance should reflect the make up of society in this regards" (Bennett, 1996: 2).

2.5.1 Museums social inclusion and diversity

Social inclusion has emerged as a critical issue for museums in the last decade, particularly in Britain where it has been integrated in cultural policy and governance (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2000; Sandell, 1998, 2000; Dodd & Sandell, 2001). Newman et al. (2005) have made an important distinction between inclusion and identity as a process of citizenship and its use by governments to fulfil a socio-political agenda. This issue has caused a degree of consternation. Some museum professionals, such as Selwood (2004), argued that the government is determining cultural policy to the detriment of cultural practice. Anderson (2005), however, considered the British government's intervention timely for an industry that was in disarray and unable to repair itself. Fleming (2001) has considered the ramifications of these changes and argued that while the process of integrating inclusive practices into an industry that is fundamentally embedded in hierarchical relationships was imperative, it would take time and much readjustment.

American museologists have used the role and social relevance of the arts to promote the idea of democracy and civic dialogue. This discourse has examined the importance of dialogue, and made a distinction between activities that augment experience and those that give people an authentic opportunity to engage via dialogue (Schaffer-Bacon et al., 1999). Their discussion was representative of the arts industry in a holistic sense, and they examined what motivates and prevents citizen participation in civic dialogue, using Yankolvitch's (1999: 16) definition of dialogue as the basis upon which to assess the type of engagement they seek:

Dialogue turns out to be a highly specialised form of discussion that imposes a rigorous discipline on the participants ... when dialogue is done skilfully, the results can be extraordinary: long standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, visions shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with one another aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discussed, new perspectives and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated, and bonds of community strengthened.

Rather than community, AAM used the term public (which reflects terminology Weil (1997) used in a paper entitled 'Museums and the Public'), and their key concepts included civic issues, public discourse and civic dialogue (Schaffer-Bacon et al., 1999). Although civic discourse is seen as intangible and immeasurable, it is considered in relation to long term individual change. For Americans these issues have emerged in relation to the civil rights movement and the recognition of multicultural communities, particularly African American, Hispanic and Native American communities (Gaither,

1992; Kinard, 1985; Davis Ruffins, 1992). Prior to this, Yankolvitch (1999) mused, limited participation and dialogue was required because there was a perception that community shared common frameworks. He went on to note, however, that the increasingly pluralistic nature of society meant that the importance of dialogue needed to be restated and reframed to take account of the range of backgrounds and contexts participants brought to the negotiating table. In 2000, AAM launched its *Museums and Communities Initiative*, a museum specific project that sought to identify “the principles and practices that support dynamic engagement between American communities and their museums” (AAM website: 2002). This consultation-based research resulted in a significant collection of articles (AAM, 2002a, 2002b) that discussed and reviewed how museums engaged with communities and challenged a radical review of curatorial practices; and is analysed in more detail below.

Adoption of the social inclusion discourse in Australian museums has been less direct, although discussions published in *Museum National* (Marginson, 1993) indicated the issues of access and community inclusion was were being debated by museum professionals, and the development of immigration museums and access galleries in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney reflect the importance of multicultural cultural heritage. Bennett et al., (1996) examined gender, first peoples and multiculturalism in relation to museums and citizenship. The Queensland branch of Museums Australia (1998) developed a resource guide to examine protocols for working with indigenous and multicultural communities. *Taking the Time: museums and galleries, cultural protocols and communities* (Museums Australia Inc (Qld), 1998) recognised the importance of community engagement, addressed cultural diversity and First People’s issues and acknowledged the need for a predisposition to work with culturally diverse communities prior to any work being undertaken. Explicit mention of a community development approach to developing connections between museums and communities is mentioned, however, community, in the broader sense that Wenger (1998) outlined is not defined. It does not provide a definitive list of how to go about developing engagement strategies, but does provide a glossary of cultural ideas, terms and behaviour that can guide those practitioners intent on working with diverse cultural groups. The case studies supporting the information within the publication are a personal and effective method of representing the contextual nature of community engagement to practitioners. In contrast to Marginson’s (1993) model, considerable

emphasis is placed on the process of consultation, and recognition that the two way relationship implied by in the term 'negotiation' might be more appropriate. Further, they argue:

People who are genuinely consulted should be involved in the process of developing the proposal, storyline or test. Real consultation means they also shape the direction of the project, develop its terms of reference and participate in its outcomes (Museums Australia (Qld), 1998: 5).

The chief issue here, however, is that the consultative approach for which they advocate exemplifies terminology confusion outlined earlier in this chapter. If we understand consultation as a process of information exchange, then the type of engagement suggested here is surely participatory.

Recognition of Aboriginal rights and access to cultural heritage has been particularly significant. Kelly & Gordon (2002) applied social inclusion principles to the development of meaningful communities of practice the topic of reconciliation. These communities transcend traditional place and locality-based definitions of community and this type of work develops, in effect, not just a sense of how the idea of community is useful to museums, but also how the notion of a museum is useful to communities. Kelly & Gordon's work emerged from the Australian Museum, whose Indigenous section has integrated participatory practices not only in relation to representation in exhibitions, but in relation to employment of Aboriginal staff and outreach work with a variety of Keeping Places throughout Australia (Gordon, 2005; Museums Australia Inc., 1993). Former director of the Australian Museum, Des Griffin, was also involved in the development of the pivotal *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* (Museums Australia Inc., 1993) policy for Australian museums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, as well as the recent review of this document entitled *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities* (Museums Australia Inc., 2005). These significant developments dramatically improved issues of access the Australian museum industry.

2.5.2 Museums, access and interpretation

The other issue embedded in notions of museums, democracy and citizenship that Bennett (1996) outlined is access. As discussed above, access can be interpreted as both physical and intellectual access to collections and interpretations. In recent years it has been discussed at length in relation to entry fees and, although relevant, analysis of this is beyond the scope of this research. Thomas (1993) identified museum access in terms

of the types of programs museums developed to increase access, such as travelling exhibitions, government policy, physical location, collections, facilities, specialist knowledge, as well as self esteem. This last issue, self esteem has gained currency in arts practice and governance, particularly in relation to community cultural development (Krempf, 2002; Matarasso, 1997; CLMG, c.2004; Stapp, 1998).

Interpretive museum work is essential to the issue of access: the principles outlined by Tilden (1977) and subsequently Beck & Cable (2002) are grounded in the idea of making ideas and knowledge accessible to a range of visitors with different needs. Of these, storytelling is a key feature: “stories are very much the ‘real thing’ of museums, that kernel of authenticity that we seek to identify and preserve” (Bedford, 2001: 33). Bedford drew on the work of Bruner (1990) to discuss the role of narrative in relation to museums and learning, and noted that much museum work is that of a ‘storyteller’.

Exploring the transition from being the storyteller to the story facilitator is one of the challenges for museums as they engage in participatory storytelling projects. The value of “do-it-yourself discoveries of meaning and relationships” was noted by Thomas (1993: 7). Schaffer-Bacon (2002) has considered these issues in relation to curatorial authority, democracy and dialogue, and argued:

To be successful, a dialogue should include not only public forums with opportunities for exchange, but also the intentional inclusion and active participation of people with a stake in the issue, as informants or even collaborators in the curatorial process. Though such collaboration may be perceived as infringing on curatorial autonomy, for many curators, the choice to venture into civic terrain yields powerful results - from reconsideration of familiar or known works to fresh approaches to form, content and process in the creation of exhibitions (2002: 13).

The increasing capacity and interest in technology and the Internet has also challenged museums to make their collections and programs accessible to broader, world wide audiences and communities. Sumption (2001) noted the importance of understanding museum websites in the form of a typology which recognised the different types of access possible and achievable via this medium. This arena is a crucial and evolving arena within the museum sector, however, detailed analysis of the museums and web material is beyond the scope of this literature review.

2.5.3 Museums and learning

Although museums and education have already been discussed (2.4.2), this section recognises the important distinction between museum education and learning. Just as the role and identity of museums has evolved in the second half of the twentieth century to be more people and user focused, so too has the notion of education in relation to museums (Hein, 2000; Weil, 1999, 2002). As outlined above (2.2.2 and 2.4.2), experiential and transformative education is central to the participatory process. As this activity specifically addresses the participatory ideal, therefore, it is important to understand how and why museums have integrated education into their activities.

Museums' pedagogical identity is irrefutable, and has been developed in both an informal and formal capacity (Hein, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Carr, 2003). Informal (and mostly adult) education experiences, which involved visitors looking at and/or imagining the relevance of facts and objects (Hein, 2000; Prown in Pearce, 1993), were based on the receiver-transmitter model of education in which subject-based expertise was the legitimate authority around which interpretation was constructed (Cassels, 1996).

The emergence of the terms 'museum learning' and 'meaning making' in the 1980s re-established links between museum education activities and broader educational discourse (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a). Cassels (1996), Falk & Dierking (2000), Hein (1998) and Hooper-Greenhill (1994a, 2001, 2004) have argued that this changed the passive nature of museum education activities and made way for the consideration of the multiple contexts, meanings, interpretations and learning styles that different types of visitors bring to their museum experience. This reflects Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences which drew attention to seven key ways in which people learn and understand (see Figure 2.11). Gardner's initial theory features in the museum and heritage interpretation prescribed textbooks (Durbin, 1996) and is a crucial means via which to consider visitor meaning making and interpretive diversity. Many scholars, including Sternberg (1983) challenged Gardner's theory and argued that he replaced the concept of intelligence with talent. Despite these criticisms, however, it has been a most influential educational philosophy.

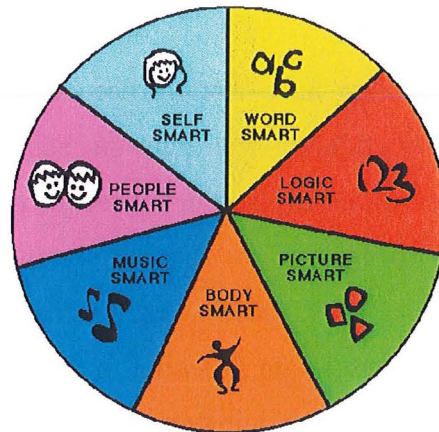


Figure 2.11: Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences, illustrated by Wilson (1988: website)

For advocates of museum learning, therefore, this broader context signifies that the development of museum programs is no longer the sole responsibility of the curator (Roberts, 1997). This essential yet controversial shift in internal museum power relations that led Hein (1996: 31) to assert:

it is this tension between our desire as teachers to teach the truth, to present the world 'as it really is', and our desire to let learners construct their own world which requires us to think seriously about epistemology, and pedagogy.

Prior to the 1990s, museologists drew principally on learning theories developed outside the museum profession (Dierking, 1996a, 1996b; Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2001). Hein (1996), like Preziosi (2004) and Hooper-Greenhill (2004), noted these ideas challenged and dismantled the realistic Platonic and Enlightenment views of education that were disconnected from the individual learner. This consideration of education from a behaviourist perspective (Dierking, 1996a; Lawrence, 1991), by embracing the psychology of education and attempting to understand what visitors did within the museum, can also be seen as a participatory approach. From a participatory perspective this understanding was the starting point for thinking about the exhibitions outside of ontological arrangements, understanding visitors and evaluation research (Lawrence, 1991), and, although museum specific literature also made room for evaluation activities, it was not until later that evaluation emerged as a powerful research methodology upon which to base museum research).

This "rational" and "independent" approach to learning has been challenged by a number of specialists within the field of museum learning. Dierking (1996a) argued that behaviourism, developmentalism and cognitive science neglected the importance of social and physical contexts which consequently rendered them narrow and of little use

to understanding the complexity of learning opportunities within museums. Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri (2001) highlighted Rousseau's work in relation to interactive learning theory, one that has tangible links to the principles of participation. They argued that his writings were a precursor to "modern cognitive developmental research" that recognised the importance of environmental influences and context (2001: 4) and thus cemented the idea of learning in relation to participation.

Since the 1990s, the literature and scholarship on museum learning has developed at a more rapid pace than perhaps any other area in the museum studies arena, particularly in America (Dierking et al., 2004; Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2001). Dierking (1996a, 1996b) believed that traditional notions of learning, such as education, schooling, and the acquisition of vast amounts of factual information, do not fit into the museum milieu comfortably. She favoured the notion of museum learning as "an active process of assimilating and accommodating information within a social, physical, and psychological context" (Dierking, 1996b: 25-26). Analysing learning in relation to memory and recollection, receipt and transfer, motivation, individual learning styles and context introduced considerable complexity and variables into the discussion of museum learning and attempts to predict visitor behaviour. In doing so, Dierking challenged the development of museum activities in relation to the "average visitor", a position that championed individual learning contexts and which can be seen (to some extent) as a precursor to the social inclusion rhetoric that emerged in the museum sector (Dodd & Sandell, 2001).

This approach has been explored in more depth via the "interactive experience model" that Dierking developed with museum learning expert, John Falk (1996b: 28). This model situated learning within a series of contexts and was subsequently renamed the "Contextual Model of Learning" (see Figure 2.12) (Falk & Dierking, 2000: 10).

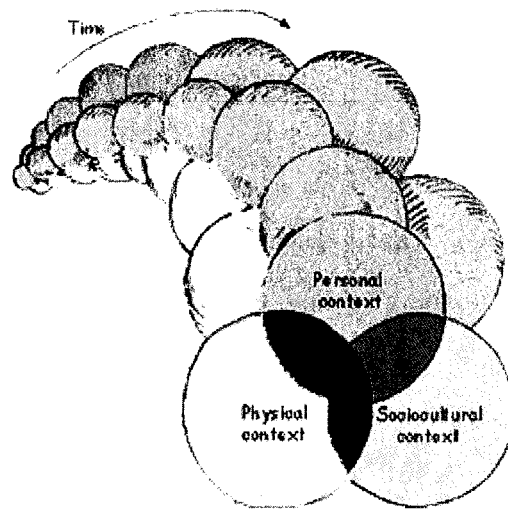


Figure 2.12: The Contextual Model of Learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000: 12).

The interactive model had considered learning in relation to personal, social and immediate activity; the contextual model recategorised these as personal, socio-cultural and physical, and also gave a temporal context to the model to address what Falk & Dierking (2000) identified as deficiency in longitudinal approaches to visitor research. Within these contexts, Falk & Dierking (2000: 136-137) identified “eight key factors that influence learning”:

Personal Context

1. Motivation and expectations
2. Prior knowledge, interests and beliefs
3. Choice and control

Sociocultural Context

4. Within-group sociocultural mediation
5. Facilitated mediation by others

Physical Context

6. Advance organiser and orientation
7. Design
8. Reinforcing events and experiences outside the museum.

This has resonance with the constructivist approach to learning – “learners construct knowledge for themselves ... as he or she learns” - that Hein has advocated for in a variety of articles and books (1996: 32, 1998). Constructivist learning is an important framework via which to consider the issue of learning in museums. Indeed, it is one that has considerable currency in visitor research since the 1990s because it recognises that learning and knowledge are intrinsically linked to the visitor and their ability to “construct their own world” (Hein, 1996: 31). Hein (1996) drew on educational theory to outline the principles of constructivist learning and considered them in relation to museums. The constructivist paradigm Hein outlined clearly accommodated participatory principles - active and continuous learning, the social and contextual

dimensions of learning, the importance of time, motivation and prior knowledge, recognising the importance of accessible language - these are all concepts that reflect, and which are integral to, the participatory process, and which also mirror the transformative learning process.

In 1999, Gardner revised his list of intelligences and considered four additions— moral, spiritual, existential, and naturalist. He settled on the latter two, even though some advocates of multiple intelligence theory, such as Wilson (1999), felt there was inconclusive evidence to justify these categories. Naturalist intelligence has been the most accepted of the new intelligences (see Figure 2.13):

Naturalist intelligence enables human beings to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment. It 'combines a description of the core ability with a characterization of the role that many cultures value' (Gardner, 1999: 48).

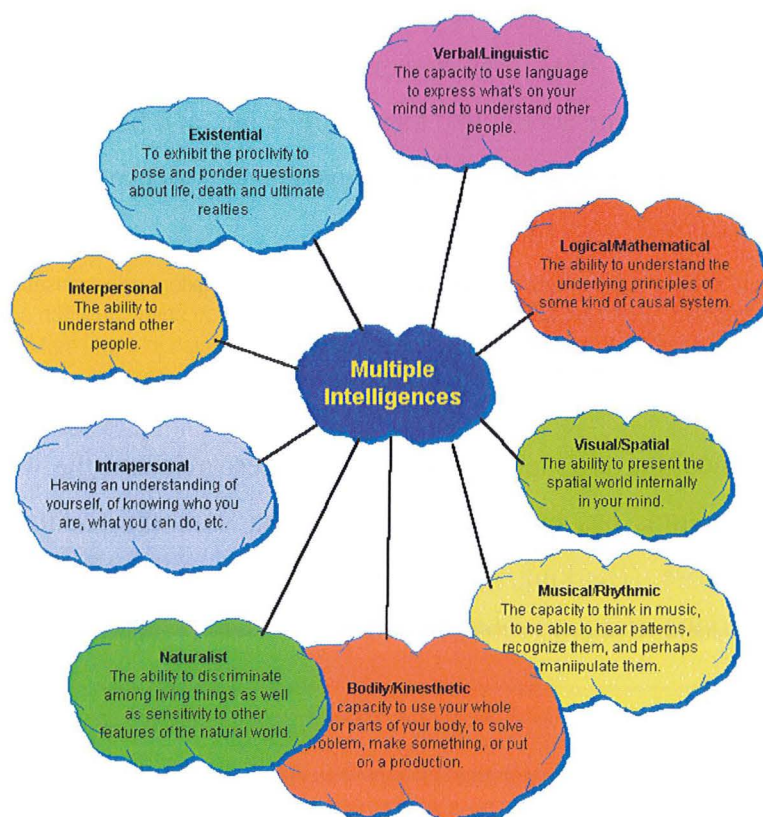


Figure 2.13: Gardner's adapted multiple intelligences, illustrated by Carson-Pickering (1999: website).

In a museum context, this concept has a natural home, particularly when one considers the evolutionary and taxonomic activities of collectors and museums. Further, it suggests there could be predisposition to environmental issues and learning that museums need to consider when they develop activities. Could it also be a way of

recognising that traditional environmental learning can link to an emotional understanding of place and landscape? Further, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the other intelligence Gardner (1999) suggested, existential, also has resonance for museums. This is particularly pertinent for museums influenced by the New Museology and which no longer simply try to provide information but rather, as Tilden (1977) suggested, work to stimulate and provoke visitors into using exhibitions and programs to question knowledge and seek alternative perspectives.

Thus, museums need to take into account the institutional mission and the types of programs the collections lend themselves to, as well as the types of visitors and audiences who will receive and interact with these collections and programs. Exponents of museum learning argue that the type of education experiences museums offer need to consider more than just the collection. If museums represent “a functional structure for cognitive change” (Carr, 2003: 18), however, they need to be clear about the way cognitive changes can come about, who their visitors are, and how they might access or experience this change as a result of their museum experience. Responding to these concerns, Roberts (1997: 132-133) suggested:

Education is not just about museums teaching visitors; it is about visitors using museums in ways that are personally significant to them. It is about the mismatch that arises between a museum's culture and a visitor's culture; and it is about negotiating that mismatch in a way that is respectful of both. The essence of the education enterprise is thus the making of meaning.

It is no coincidence that the increased interest and research into the way people learn from visiting museums has emerged in conjunction with the reframing of museum activity and purpose (Dierking, 1996a, 1996b; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2001, 2004; Roberts, 1997).

2.6 Community engagement models from the museum sector: European, Australian and American examples

As discussed previously, the notion of community engagement has re-emerged as a crucial issue for many museums (and indeed other businesses and agencies) with regards to justifying their relevance to society. Programming needs to be mindful of representativeness and exclusion, of education and learning objectives, and of project sustainability. Negotiating and conducting relationships to build participatory cultural heritage outreach programs is a time-consuming and often complicated process. Thus, ensuring institutions make the most of local contacts or special interest groups means a participatory mindset needs to be adopted right from the beginning of project design and then integrated as a crucial managerial component.

A number of models that consider participatory processes have already been developed within museums. Outreach was discussed in the previous section, and the general principles for this arena include working with other agencies, being open minded and prepared to make changes, thinking about commitment and sustainability, and setting realistic targets (*Museum Practice*, 1996). Below, models developed by Davis (1999), Fuller (1992), Marginson (1993), and definite principles advocated by AAM and the AMM are outlined and briefly discussed in relation to participatory discourse.

2.6.1 The Ecomuseum concept: a European model

Ecomuseums are hard to define, despite the criteria proposed by Boylan and Davis (both cited in Maggi et al., 2000). The ecomuseum model, developed by Rivière and de Varine, evolved from the Scandinavian open air museums, in which heritage was transferred and clustered into a specific site, and the neighbourhood museums in America (Kinard, 1985; Gaither, 1992). Ecomuseums interpret the cultural and natural landscapes and ecology in which they are located, include both tangible and intangible material culture, and generate and respond to community initiatives and place-based collective memory (Rivière, 1985; Hubert, 1985). By placing human development in the context of the surrounding environment, the ecomuseum concept broadened the interpretive potential of natural history, and challenged traditional models for interpreting natural and environmental science (Davis, 1996).

The difference between ecomuseums and traditional museums, and their relationships to the surrounding environment and community is illustrated in a number of models developed by Davis (1999, 2005) (see Figures 2.14 and 2.15):

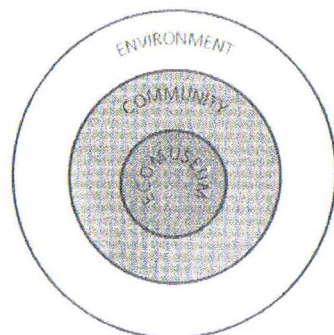


Figure 2.14: “Ecomuseums must be located within the community and the local environment” Davis (2005: 373).

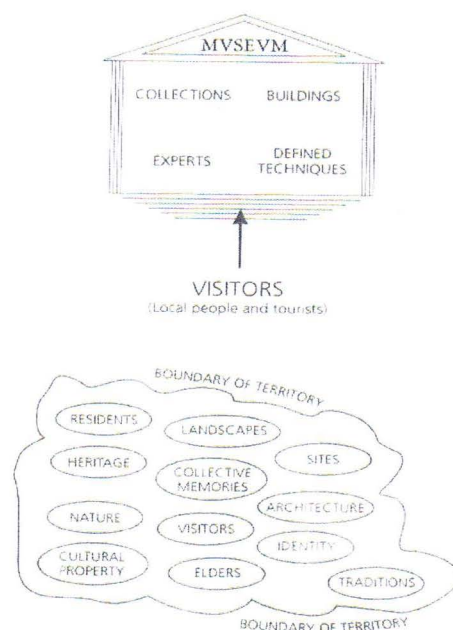


Figure 2.15: A spatial representation of differences between museum types: traditional museum (top) and the eco museums (bottom) (Davis, 2005: 371).

The idea of the ecomuseum enabled locally-based museums to address some of the community engagement issues identified by the New Museologists and combine an increased awareness of place and the environment into their activities (Davies, 1999 Maggi et al., 2000). The extent to which the New Museology and ecomuseum approach to museum work enabled genuine engagement with the communities is the subject of much debate. Witcomb (2003) has been uncomfortable about the polarization between

traditional museum work which focuses on the collections and the more ideas-focused approach of the new museologists. By attempting to interpret the grey area in-between these two perspectives, she tried to re-imagine the old museum and its object focus in the context of more contemporary interpretive debates. Thus, for Witcomb, the issue of access and equity was symbolised by the museum world embracing the notion of cultural diversity, and pluralism.

As ecomuseums extended the idea of the museum beyond the confines of museum walls to encompass a territory or region, proponents of the concept focused on museums having inhabitants as opposed audiences (Delarge, 2001). One could argue that the rise of the ecomuseum concept and the fact that many traditional museums struggled with such concepts as “sense of place” and empowerment of communities (Davies, 1999) gave traditional museums a legitimate reason to avoid ways of integrating “community” more fully into their activities. If community engagement, sense of place initiatives and local narratives were the domain of local and community museums, then major state and national museums might be justified in focusing on collection, education and exhibition projects pitched at a broader scale that address national narratives of history and place.

According to Maggi (2002) two types of ecomuseum model have emerged: local museums with a focus on the surrounding environment (natural and cultural) and exemplified by Ecomuseum of the Grande Lande by the Regional Park of the Landes de Gascogne, France; and local community museums with an interest in social issues, exemplified by Le Creusot. Yet there is no blueprint for developing an ecomuseum as each depends on the environment, locality and community in which it is embedded. There are, however, a number of components, including recognition of landscape as culture, living and intangible heritage and the importance of community engagement.

Ecomuseums are most prevalent in Europe, particularly, France and Italy (where they are also known as territory museums), but also active in Canada (Maggi et al., 2000) and Japan where Davis (2003) has discussed them in relation to democratisation. An ecomuseum is also under development at Vietnam’s World Heritage site at Halong Bay (and due to open in January 2006) (Galla, 2005). Although a number of interpretive centres integrate aspects of ecomuseology into their practices, such as Kodja Place in

Kojonup, Western Australia, at present only one Australian museum formally identifies as an ecomuseum: Melbourne's Living Museum of the West. Situated in Melbourne's western industrial suburbs, participatory practices have been central to the Living Museum of the West's mission (Haffenden, 1994, 2005).

2.6.2 An Australian museum ladder of participation

Advocating participation as one of the benefits of increased community access in the museums arena, Marginson's (1993) (see Figure 2.16) model presented a direct link between museums, access and participation theory, and considered the need for participation in relation to changing social and government agenda.

The model lays out an eight stage framework, albeit a simplified one in terms of the breadth of museum activities, and applies it to the areas of general policy, exhibition development and collection management. Drawing on Arnstein's (1969) ladder, and presumably on the debate which analysed the consultative dimensions of participation, it is interesting to note that Marginson's model makes use of the word consultation only once, preferring instead to look at the idea of interaction and discussion. Marginson acknowledged that few museums allowed communities to participate at the 'top end' of the model, but apart from acknowledging that "community access may also help to expand collections with little extra cost, develop collaboration to increase museum knowledge, and also be an effective and logical way to respond to political pressure to appeal to a wider political constituency" (1993: 9) failed to fully develop a cogent argument with which to support the implementation of the model into the museum industry.

Rungs On The Ladder Of Citizen Participation	General Policy Process	Exhibition Development	Collection Management
1. Public Relations	No participation by community. Key community leaders accessed only for promotion. May be manipulated.	Promotional purposes only.	Promotion only.
2. Information Dissemination	Community accessed for promotional purposes and information on museum directions.	Community networks tapped for exhibition promotion, education programs etc., targeted to groups in community.	Community made aware of collections for exhibition and promotional purposes only. Community collectors may be accessed.
3. Information Collection	Community source of information to develop policy. Policy clearly 'of the museum type'.	Community access to develop content only according to curatorial precepts.	Community accessed for collection material only.
4. Interaction/ Discussion	Community formally consulted with joint project development. Suggestions welcomed and may be acted upon.	Seminars, group interviews, research and collections from within community and implemented by expert.	Community is source of collection, key members used to acquire material held within museums.
5. Share In Decision Making	Policy formulated made without structure, might be unwritten. Decisions are prerogative of key people.	Exhibition devised and developed by key people. Wider group as helpers.	Management by key people. Notion of 'expert' asserted. Collection definitely within museum.
6. Partnership	Museum and community meet regularly. Decisions formally recorded and mutually binding. Decisions are democratically reached.	Exhibitions are joint undertakings and outcomes are mutually shared.	Collection jointly owned and managed. Decision concerning acquisition and disposal made democratically. Collection within museum.
7. Delegated Control	Power to organise and make firm decisions delegated to community. Decisions are binding but higher authority has veto which is not exercised without due process.	Exhibition programs devised and implemented by community. Higher authority has veto/censorship.	Collection managed by community. Higher authority has veto. Collection likely to be within museum.
8. Community Control	Power to organise and make decisions with the community. Decisions are binding. Community has power to raise funds and manage resources.	Exhibition devised, designed and implemented by community without external control.	Control with community over acquisition and disposal. Collection could be held by individual community.

Figure 2.16: Access and participation model for museums (Marginson, 1993: 10).¹⁶

In a discussion of museums, access and participation, Trotter (1996) directly engaged with and critiqued Marginson's model as lacking a clear definition or sense of the multifaceted nature of community but acknowledged that Marginson's work avoided the trap of confusing access as participation. One could argue, however, that there is limited sense of the contextual nature of participation and the multifaceted nature of museums as communities. A notable omission, too, is the recognition of outreach, public programs and learning as legitimate areas within the museum industry in which participation is critical, and which seems contrary to the radical engagement approach advocated for in the model. Perhaps, therefore, the focus on more traditional areas of museum practice reflects the context in which the model was devised: that is, in a

¹⁶ See Table 7F, Chapter 7 for how this model is analysed in relation to case study research findings.

climate when the Australian national museums association was amalgamating and thus in which unity in process was desirable (Marginson, 1993b).

2.6.3 Social inclusion in British museums

As discussed above, social inclusion has been a major theme for contemporary British museologists (Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Fleming, 2001; Hooper-Greenhill, 2001; Matarasso, 2000; Newman, 2001, 2005; Sandell, 1998). Dodd & Sandell (2001) in particular, developed a model to suggest museums engaged in the business of social inclusion could have an impact at three levels: individual, community and society (see Figure 2.17). The model suggests communication methods to reach each these groups, noting face-to-face at the personal level and as possible via outreach programs, and neighbourhood regeneration at the community level. Although there is sufficient discussion of the concept of society to convey the complexity of the inclusion agenda, the concept of community relates primarily to neighbourhoods and locations in this model and remains elusive.

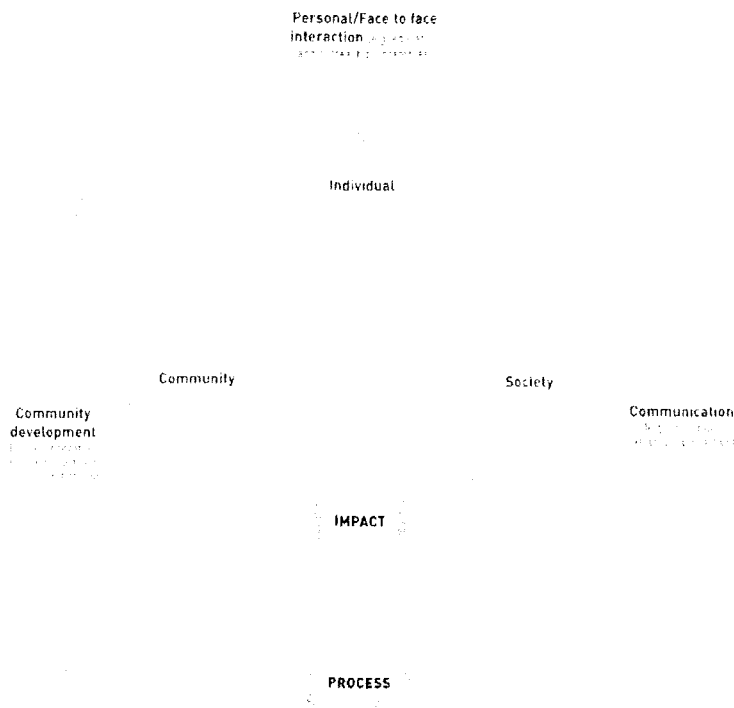


Figure 2.17 Social inclusion and the museum: impact and process (Dodd & Sandell, 2001: 25).

Despite this critique, however, one of the strengths of this discussion is the inclusion of the rural context in the social inclusion debate. Geographic distance and isolation, unemployment and seasonal work, limited accesses to services, a social perception of

the rural idyll and the undeclared exclusion of those engaged in sustainability ventures as well as the limited human and financial resources for rural museums all have an impact on the museum's ability to be a useful social service (Dodd & Sandell, 2001). This model and accompanying discussion, then, contributes an awareness of social inclusion/exclusion issues that affect groups beyond those traditionally addressed in this arena.

2.6.4 American museums and civic dialogue

The link between democracy, civic dialogue, the arts industry and museums has been discussed by American practitioners in two distinct and influential programs. The first, *Animating Democracy* (Schaffer-Bacon, et al., 1999), identified the potential for the arts to stimulate and motivate participation in civic dialogue and democracy. The participatory dimensions of this initiative reflect the principles outlined above and resonate with the needs of the museum industry. The report identified a number of areas in the arts industry that have the ability to both generate and sustain activity and engagement in this arena:

- Exchange and knowledge building
- Documentation and scholarship
- Institutional capacity building
- Innovation and collaboration
- Training and professional development
- Communication and criticisms
- Recognition and public awareness (Schaffer-Bacon, et al., 1999: 63-64)

Importantly, the project identified the additional role of facilitator to traditional arts practitioner roles so that they become, in effect, convenors for participation and engagement in civic dialogue. This extends the traditional role boundaries for arts practitioners, and engages them in social change agenda, a role that requires additional training and understanding in order to be carried out appropriately.

The ideas advocated for in *Animating Democracy* were applied by the American Association for *Museums in Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* that formed part of the *Museums and Community Initiative* (Archibald, 2002). This major review of the way museums work with and engage communities challenged the industry to go beyond museum walls and explore the potential for different liaisons and community relationships. It challenged practitioners to ask how museums could enable communities to own museums and “to learn and master the process of civic

engagement” (Hirzy, 2002: 10). It ran the Museums and Community dialogues with multifaceted communities around America and from these developed a process to assist museums promoting civic dialogue and thus participation in their activities, being careful to avoid calling the resulting procedures a blueprint for engagement. Instead, they identified 5 areas to which museums needed to commit:

- Examining and testing the beliefs and practices – institutional and individual – that shape their sense of civic purpose ...
- Learning from promising models of communities engagement and collaborative leadership...
- Nurturing staff growth and capacity ...
- Replacing episodic partnership with comprehensive, flexible, and sustained organisation –to organisation relationships ...
- Expanding the museum's impact on the civic landscape (Hirzy, 2002: 11)

Further, an inventory of museum assets was compiled so that practitioners could reflect on what museums could offer in the exchange process rather than concentrate on traditional modes of transaction via program based relationship and audience development: accessibility, connectedness, safety, objectivity, trustworthiness, reward, substance and reciprocity (Hirzy, 2002: 15).¹⁷ These reflect some of the attributes discussed in the participatory literature: they present museums as both a space and as an institution connected to ideas fundamental to participatory and democratic processes.

This positive and well directed publication, however, does not reflect on international examples to develop its position – the ecomuseum philosophy and models could have contributed to discussions as case studies and examples. Further, Hirzy (2002: 10) argued that museums have “a deeply internalised belief that engagement matters; that the rationale for it does not need to be explained repeatedly; and that it should happen on many levels within the institution”. This dissertation queries this statement and emphasises the conditional nature of the claim. Museums certainly acknowledge the value of community engagement approaches, particularly in regard to fulfilling government agendas, and many staff members are committed to the development of this approach. But whether or not the objective is fulfilled is another matter: the rationale for this approach does require repeated explanation, particularly from a financial and budgetary perspective, and particularly in a climate when financial accountability places demands and constraints on spending and activities. Deep commitment is, perhaps, not enough to impress the importance of integrating this approach into museum planning manuals.

¹⁷ See Table 7B, Chapter 7 for an application of these principles.

2.7 Conclusion: the benefits of theorising participation in museums

Clearly, participation is not a new concept: it is a fundamental dimension of human interaction with culture, democracy, community development, education and environmental management. The principles that emerge from this analysis of participatory theory – respect, trust, inclusion, communication, representation and learning – are essential components of functional and civil social interaction. In a way, one could argue that participatory and democratic principles are akin to an outline of ‘good behaviour’ in which people respect each other and are considerate of each others needs so that each can evolve and grow. Remaining true to these values has been the concern of many participatory theorists, and one can interpret their contributions as an indication of the ongoing need to recognise that although integrating these ideals in an applied context can be challenging, it remains essential.

The literature and examples discussed in this chapter illustrate that the notion of community engagement has re-emerged as a crucial issue for many museums (and indeed other agencies) with regards to justifying their social relevance. It is plain that the museum world has recognised and embraced the concepts of access diversity, inclusion and learning as pivotal to their own development as well as to the publics they represent. These concepts are central to understanding the way museums have developed community engagement initiatives, and therefore will be applied to the analysis of the Australian museum industry and case study material presented in Part 2 of this dissertation.

The practical application and pursuit of participatory ideals, however, remains a complicated and contested issue. This is demonstrated by the participatory dilemma inherent in discussions of representative and participatory democracy, and the ever-changing notion and definition of the concept of community. Differing opinions as to the perceived benefits and agendas inherent in participatory practices suggest that tangible evidence of their use and implementation is still required to substantiate the value of engagement practices. It is evident, too, in the way the terms participation, consultation and engagement are often appropriated, used interchangeably and/or applied to reflect the government agendas of the day. Although museums are committed to an inclusive agenda, the interchangeable use of these concepts mean this potentially

transformative methodology remains tangential to their overall mission and activities. Integrating participatory dimensions and processes into the planning phase of projects is crucial, and leadership is required at the management level in order for the approach benefit participants, museum workers and the audiences that engage with the work created. Too often, timelines and limited human and financial resources (as well as a tacit suspicion of those processes in which traditional roles are reversed and in which institutional authority is challenged), restrict the development of genuine community engagement initiatives.

The discussion of participatory models from a range of disciplines illustrates the value of models for providing frameworks to assist the development of participatory practices. The major differences between the models developed in different disciplines to those within the museum sector relate to the definitions of both community and engagement. Further, models specific to the arena of museum outreach, as opposed to NRM extension and CCD models, for example, are not as well developed on a practical or theoretical basis. While they integrate social inclusion, a sense of civic duty, access, diversity and learning, they mostly consider the positives of such approaches without analysing the negative results that can arise from poorly conceived or delivered engagement practices. For museum workers, therefore, it is useful to continually ask what does participation and community engagement really mean in terms of project development – at both a community and institutional level. Further, they need to reflect on whether their project is responsive, reactive or proactive in terms of activating public participation, (or indeed whether it requires participation). Are the elements of learning, access, inclusion, and so forth, present to justify its status as participatory? To reiterate: if a museum has already defined the intended outcome and output, what exactly is it that they are asking communities to participate in during the production process, and can this really be called participation?

Thus the research question, to explore why museum outreach (as the dominant medium for extended community engagement initiatives) has not engaged more fully with existing models for participatory practices, remains valid. Following the research methodology chapter, participatory dimensions and practices in the Australian museum industry are explored in relation to the concepts discussed in this chapter. Further, the aim of this dissertation to reconceptualise participatory possibilities for the museum

industry and develop a spectrum that presents a range of definitions and variables to promote a greater understanding of the variables involved in participatory approaches similarly remains relevant. Accordingly, the research methodology for applying these theoretical concepts in a practical context is explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

*Research methodology:
philosophy, context and design*

3.1 Introduction

With an interest in participatory practices, this thesis has, almost as a mandate, an obligation to consider participatory paradigms that support its design and development. Developing a critical understanding of participatory theories that have influenced this dissertation has, therefore, been a crucial factor in the research design, collection of data and analysis of results. This philosophical approach is underpinned by a social constructivist perspective: experiences from previous education, research and work have all contributed to my interest in the participatory world view. Prior to a practical description of the research context and method, therefore, Section 3.2 outlines which participatory paradigms and experiences have influenced the manner in which this research has been undertaken and the way it is presented.

Timing and research context are important factors in the design of this research. The thesis has been made possible by a collaborative Australian Research Council Linkage Grant between the University of Tasmania, the National Museum Australia (NMA) and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC). The grant, *Committing to Place (CTP)*, was designed in 2002, at a time when both the NMA and MDBC were seeking to understand the benefits and practice of community engagement initiatives and integrate them more fully into their corporate agendas and business practices. Thus the *CTP* project focused and set boundaries for this research. Further, it influenced the choice of evaluation as a research method and process. Consequently, Section 3.3 outlines the specific parameters of *CTP* and the context in which this thesis has been developed.

Section 3.4 outlines the qualitative methods employed to gather information for each section of the thesis, and illustrates which tools have been used to undertake the process of data review and analysis. In keeping with participatory research practices, review and reflection are conscious elements of the research design and have influenced the way the research has evolved (Wadsworth, 1998). The final subsection in this methods chapter, therefore, outlines the methods and tools employed to compile this reflective data.

3.2 Research philosophy: influential participatory paradigms and methodologies

As outlined in the previous chapter, participatory principles and practices are integrated into a range of disciplines and discourses. Political scientists, for example, grapple with participatory discourse in the context of democratic theory, governance and social capital (Chandler, 2000; Dryzek, 1996, 2002; Fung et al., 2003; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1989; McCoy & Scully, 2002; Pateman, 1970). Sociologists, natural resource management and community development and health workers use the term to examine the dynamics of and potential for social and behavioural change (Cornwall, 2000; Larson et al., 2001; Pretty, 1995; Putnam, 2000; Ross et al., 2002; White, 1996). Arts and cultural workers consider participation in relation to audience learning, skills transfer and social inclusion (Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Hawkes, 2000; Hein, 1996, 1998; Matarasso, 1997). Public planners seek to incorporate local knowledge into development via the use of consultative processes (Arnstein, 1969; Innes & Booher, 2004). And, educators and evaluators apply participatory principles in relation to who conducts their research and design, and the way they develop learning and teaching activities (Fals Borda, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mayo, 2003; Park, 2001; Reason, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Wadsworth, 1993, 1997, 1998; Wenger, 1999).

Action research, participatory action research, social constructivism, evaluation and participatory evaluation share a range of epistemological similarities. In each of these frameworks, the processes of research are seen, in many ways, as important as the results and final product. Action research and participatory evaluation practitioners, in particular, have provided methodological avenues for considering the participatory dimensions of research, specifically research which results in change (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Cummings, 2002; Fals Borda, 2001; Park, 2001; Seymour-Rolls, 1998; Wadsworth, 1998, 2001; Whyte, 1991a, 1991b). These approaches have identified a need to bring a variety of stakeholders into the research process, particularly social and educational research, and which necessitates appreciation of the different types of participation that occurs in a range of different contexts.

3.2.1 Action research, participatory action research, social constructivism and evaluation

An action research approach to research design fulfils the philosophical and methodological prerequisites for a thesis concerned with participatory practice. Action researchers believe there are tangible links between research processes, its human dimensions and the ensuing results (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). This approach embodies a sense of cooperation and transformation, a ‘social research for social change’ mantra that underpins the active elements of the methodology: “research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ people” (Heron & Reason, 2001:179). Action research is also defined in reference to participatory democracy, action and reflection, and community development:

Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview ... It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Bradbury & Reason, 2001:1)

Participatory action researchers, those who seek to democratise the research process by integrating project participants into the research at various stages in a project, have extended the participatory dimensions of this methodology (Brinton Lakes, 2001; Wadsworth, 1998; Kemmis, 1990; McTaggart, 1997). This approach has been particularly influential in the community development and community arts sectors (Adams & Goldbard, 2001, 2002; Hawkes, 2001; Kreml, 2002; Fals Borda, 2001; Sonn et al., 2002; White, 1996; Whyte, 1991). Further, and significantly, it has also been a popular methodological tool for feminist academics and researchers. As inclusion, diversity and equity have been central tenets within feminist discourse, feminism and the consideration of gender issues is also an important aspect of participation. Applying aspects of participatory action research to the research design, therefore, has warranted taking feminist approaches to data collection into consideration. Wadsworth, (1998: website) notes that in a feminist approach:

conversation, group discussions, story-telling, and participant/observation (participants-as-observers) are more likely to be used than more artificial techniques such as questionnaires, one to one interviews, pre-structured schedules, scales and standardised inventories, and secondary materials analysis.

As such, understanding and appreciating the power relations inherent in the process of data collection has meant adapting the fieldwork and research methods to suit the subject and situation, particularly in the case of working with minors.

Social constructivists believe individuals bring personal experiences and knowledge to situations and that these impact the way research is conducted, analysed and used (Lincoln, 2001; Hein & Alexander, 1998). Said (1978: 25) called this 'the personal dimension' and drew on Gramsci's observation that researchers should compile an inventory of influences that contextualise perspective and experience. Advocates of participatory practices and social constructivism have debated and discussed the similarities between the two paradigms. Heron & Reason's (1997) objections to constructivism were that participatory experiences resulted in a form of knowledge transaction, and that the process of participation itself shaped that subsequent formulation of knowledge. Although they challenged Guba & Lincoln's (1989) constructivist approach to research as a form of radical constructivism, they acknowledged that it shared the self reflexive qualities of the participatory worldview. Lincoln (2001: 126) drew parallels between the two paradigms, and noted:

there are at least six ways in which these various models (paradigms) may be viewed as symmetrical: mandates for action; the press for social justice; the new covenant between researcher and researched; the relationships between researcher and academia; the new mandates for what constitutes ethical practices; and expanded epistemologies for mutual learning.

Lincoln emphasised evaluation in her discussion, noting that "action research and constructivist inquiry and evaluation ... are focussed on utilisation" (1991: 126). The importance of research utilisation in the discussion of participatory approaches is highlighted in 'creative' and 'utilisation-focussed' approaches to evaluation which advocated for the integration of participatory dimensions and processes into the evaluation process. In this respect, Patton, (1981: 15) argued:

when working with decision makers and information users throughout an evaluation process, effectiveness in helping improve programs can be significantly increased by deliberate and calculated use of a variety of conceptual approaches, focusing techniques, communication skills, and teaching devices. It is not sufficient to produce a technically defensible and methodologically rigorous final report if one cares about using evaluation finding to improve programs. Where actual utilization of evaluation findings for program decision making and improvement is the goal, evaluators will often find that they need communications, group facilitation, and consulting skills that go well beyond the usual content of most methodologically oriented evaluation and social science training programs.

Evaluation has evolved from being managerially driven to include multi-stakeholder perspectives and needs (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1981, 1997). Further, participatory evaluation has sought to integrate people into the evaluation process, a self help and evaluation methodology that has also been called empowerment evaluation (Patton, 1990, 2002.) Reflection on the 'influence' of evaluation studies rather than just

the usefulness of the information gathered has also been considered in reviews of evaluation practice (Kirkhart, 2002). Some authors see this as a positive intellectual shift for the discipline, one which forces evaluators to reflect on the process and delivery of information and the value of the work they are doing (Cummings, 2002). Others extend this focus to include a participatory and ongoing dimension, or that include those institutions and practitioners actually undertaking the evaluation research:

Evaluation is now construed as research for informing decision-making. Instead of just an ex-post assessment or audit, evaluation is now understood to contribute to all stages of project or programme development. Rather than the domain solely of experts, evaluation is now seen as a participatory approach that empowers and builds capacity within institutions and programmes. Evaluation is a form of action research that informs project/programme design. (Vanclay et al., 2004: 546-7).

Approaching evaluation studies from the perspective of influence, rather than just usefulness, allows researcher broaden the participant base in the evaluation process and thus blur the boundaries between evaluation research projects and their traditional audiences.

Focus on the process, usefulness and influence of research itself are all integrated into these methodologies. Similarly, blurring the boundaries between researcher and those being researched has been a part of each methodological agenda. The idea of an agreement between the researcher and those being researched (Lincoln, 2001), and the notion of researchers being “friendly outsiders” (Greenwood & Levin, 1998), are approaches intended to challenge empirical and positivist approaches to research practise. Integrating the idea of the shifting role of the researcher, therefore, has been critical to the choice of research tools in this thesis, and the way in which fieldwork has been conducted (and is addressed in Sections 3.4 and 3.5).

Recognition of the social construction of knowledge, and the active engagement of researchers and stakeholders in projects that seek to explore and understand human behaviour, has also influenced this research. These values necessitate interaction, engagement and flexibility on behalf of the researcher. They require: *respect* for people, their knowledge and experiences; a commitment to *responsive* research practices; belief in the potential of *democratic processes* to bring about *social change*; a commitment to *action, learning by doing and engagement* throughout the research process; and a recognition of the *researchers voice* within the research process (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2003; Dick, 1997; Reason & Bradbury 2001).

Integrating these principles to the research design has required choosing a methodology and methods that help realize these ideals. A review of the thesis sections, however, shows that while specific research into programs run by Australian museums, interviews with key informants in the Australian museum industry, and the three minor case studies is influenced by participatory perspectives, it does not constitute participatory research itself. Thus, while this thesis is clearly influenced by participatory paradigms, only the fieldwork for the major case study can be called action research.

3.2.2 Ladders of participation

Although discussed in the previous chapter, ladders of citizen participation are an applied manifestation and outcome of the process of theorising about participatory practices. Arnstein's typology and the subsequent adaptations (Cornwall, 1996; Marginson, 1993; Pretty, 1995; White, 1996) provide a staged or tiered approach to the analysis and practice of participation. The ladders and their rationale demonstrate how projects aiming to be genuine to the participatory ideal require institutions to cede aspects of project control to communities. For many institutions, such an approach is intangible, indeed contrary to the tightly framed financial, legal and research obligations that often govern their operational activities. Community development and NRM practitioners have paid particular attention to these typologies, however, in response to the growing interest in the community dimensions of project development, design and management. These ladders have provided a starting point for developing an analytical framework to assess participation in the minor and major case studies within this dissertation.

Thus the challenge is to devise a participatory spectrum that considers and values both institutional and community requirements. Such a spectrum might, as Ross et al. (2002) suggest, go beyond the hierarchical implication of the ladders of participation. It could create avenues for producing projects that recognise that social change via participatory processes challenges existing power structures and thus creates new structures. Thus, rather than a ladder, a participatory spectrum, one dependent on agency, project tenure, participant selection, the specific project and the duration of the project (Ross et al., 2002) is perhaps a more useful way to assess and understand participatory practices.

3.2.3 Photovoice: images and storytelling

Photovoice is a participatory action research tool used by researchers to gauge community/participant perspectives. Wang & Burris (1994, 1997), the key researchers involved in developing this methodology, drew on a number of discourses in its creation, including critical consciousness, feminist theory and documentary photography. Wang (1998: website) defined Photovoice as a way of creating social change through photography:

Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for social action and change, in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the visual image and accompanying stories to furnish evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise to create healthful public policy.

One could also argue that this approach draws on the discourses of community cultural development, social inclusion, democracy and participation (Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Hawkes, 2001; Reason, 1994; Sandell, 1998). What Photovoice offers is a mixture of participatory and evaluation functions that can provide such outcomes as a documentary record of communities perspectives, improved communication skills between communities and policy makers, engagement of policy makers (Wang, 1998) as well as skills development and community empowerment.

Photovoice has been demonstrated in the public health and community development arenas, both in Australia and internationally. One of the most well-known Photovoice projects is *Visual Voices: 100 Photographs of Village China by the Women of Yunnan Province* (Wu et al., 1995). This project involved 62 women being provided with cameras and a brief to visually document their lifestyle, health and work realities. The aim was to gain a better understanding of what rural workers thought was needed in their community and to compare this with what academics thought they required (Wu et al., 1995). Other international Photovoice projects have been run in Cambodia, Vietnam, England and India (Wang, 1998).

A form of Photovoice has been used by two Australian projects in the field of natural resource management as well. In 2002, a project that aimed to explore how people felt about the Avon River in Western Australia via the use of photography and stories resulted in a booklet called *Reflections on the Avon* (Moore, 2002). Another project in

South Gippsland, Victoria, used photo elicitation to explore the way farmers consider how to change landscape practices:

The photo elicitation process allows farmers and government an insight to the decision-making process. It was not intended to evaluate Landcare per se, but in reality, it offers an understanding of how farmers perceive Landcare at a grass-roots level. As farmers analyze their photographs, they define 'conservation' on their farms (Beilin, 2001:150).

All of these projects have provided community perspectives, views and voices that are often overlooked in policy or project development. They also provide project developers with an evaluation perspective: the style, content and even the number of images produced are physical evidence of a project's direction, reception and relevance.

The potential for museums and Photovoice

Museums engage with images and stories on a day-to-day basis. But there is potential for museums to be more creative in the way they understand topics and issues in a range of communities. Photovoice offers an opportunity to develop collaborative projects with communities and to integrate evaluation into project delivery and design, and thus is a great candidate for outreach and community projects. What is interesting about the Photovoice method is that it offers a chance to be more engaged with the public in a creative and participatory capacity.

It also has the potential to complement, link and extend institutional collecting policies, in either a digital or analogue capacity. Obviously, collection activities need to reflect a museum's mission and collection policy and need to take into account an approach to assessing the significance of such material. Nonetheless, Photovoice could be a way of getting the stories with additional images that Casey identified in her vision for the National Museum of Australia (Casey, 2001a). This is exactly what the National Museum aims to achieve via the outreach projects listed above. Of these, *Basin Bytes* most closely adheres to the Photovoice philosophy and methodology, and this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 (Wills et al. 2004c).

3.2.4 'The personal dimension' an relevant experience and the influence of the researcher

Prior experience working in the heritage and museum industries have influenced the choice of minor case studies, the identification of museum interviewees, and have

contributed substantially the focus on participatory discourses and practices. Understanding and integrating community involvement in research projects has roots in the 'idea' of public history. That is, as a democratising form of history that 'recognise[s] the power of memory and place' (Griffiths, 1996: 217), and which includes communities and academic 'outsiders' in "exploring what it means to remember ... and what to do with memories to make them active and alive, as opposed to mere objects of collection" (Frisch in Griffiths, 1996: 218).

While working on environmental histories, community museum projects, and exhibitions and events, I have observed that when people and communities are involved in the process of collecting, conserving, documenting, exhibiting or remembering places and environment, or cultural and social histories, feelings of pride, pleasure and empowerment are often generated. These observations have a variety of origins. They reflect, in part, my own engagement with the historic environment that was cultivated by my parents during habitual Sunday walks in the Dorset countryside prior to immigrating to Australia. Since this move, a fascination in how other people belong or do not belong in their communities has fuelled much of my inquiry – perhaps in order to re-imagine, redefine or simply understand my own displaced sense of belonging – and triggered an interest in the way tangible and intangible material culture can be used to explore these issues (Archibald 1999, 2004; Griffiths, 1996; Read, 1997, 2000; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998).

In addition to this personal history, two museum projects illustrate the extent to which previous experience has influenced this thinking about museums and participatory practices. *Future Harvest*¹⁸ and *Belonging*¹⁹ were travelling exhibitions developed by major Australian state and national cultural institutions. Individual and community memories, stories and material culture were key interpretive strategies for each exhibition. Curatorial work on both of these exhibitions included identifying participants and undertaking fieldwork, experiences that have impressed upon me the importance of community consultation strategies and face-to-face interaction in the development of community projects.

¹⁸ Museum Victoria 1998, *Future Harvest: A journey towards a sustainable future*. This travelling exhibition forms one of the minor case studies within this dissertation.

¹⁹ *Belonging: A Century Celebrated* was a collaborative exhibition between the state libraries of NSW and Victoria, the National Library of Australia and the National Archives of Australia.

The participatory dimensions of each project were, however, vastly different. Research for *Future Harvest*, an exhibition about sustainable agriculture, was carried out by two field curators²⁰ who visited 18 Victorian farms. They collected oral histories and objects, worked with photographers and a film crew to capture the visual dimensions of each landscape, and liaised with farmers as to the way they were to be represented in the exhibition. *Future Harvest* embedded community engagement principles into the research and development process but stopped short of being genuinely participatory because it was purpose-designed and institution-driven. Participatory dimensions involved gauging community needs and requirements and negotiating with farmers over the content and presentation of each story. It was a form of action research in that it required each curator to be flexible and adaptable to fieldwork conditions. Evaluation research was conducted after the exhibition had opened at the final tour venue, but did not include the farmers or those involved in developing the exhibition.²¹

Community consultations undertaken around Australia in 2000 for *Belonging*²², a Centenary of Federation national touring exhibition, challenged the notion of place based belonging and community identity. Although the project managers integrated a community consultation strategy into project planning, time constraints and confusion as to the purpose of the consultation meant that the community sessions became more information sessions than opportunities for community input and participation. Rather than identify organising dimensions for the exhibition, the information collected was analysed in relation to themes that had been predefined by a team of researchers.

The participatory dimensions of *Belonging* emerged through the community selection process whereby each community responded to an advertisement distributed via the Australian Library Network. The benefits for participants being involved in the workshops was difficult to assess, although there was a depth of feeling in many of the stories and memories told during each session. Indeed, on rereading workshop transcripts, a constructivist theory of learning and meaning making is readily apparent: participants outlined the contextual dimensions of belonging such as family and

²⁰ *Future Harvest* field curators were Rebecca Jones and Jo Wills.

²¹ See Chapter 5 for more detailed discussion of this project.

²² *Belonging: A Century Celebrated* was a collaborative exhibition designed to showcase the collections of the state libraries of NSW and Victoria, the National Library of Australia and the National Archives of Australia.

traditions, politics, environment, religion, special places, and memories and dreams. One workshop participant, for example, told of the stifling impact of place and community on her identity; another lamented the loss of workplace communities and belonging with the demise of the manufacturing industry in Newcastle, NSW. Whether the key message of the exhibition, about different people's sense of belonging, was communicated at a broad level was also debatable. It was somewhat ironic, for instance, that a local newspaper decided to publish a picture of me as the facilitator rather than the local workshop participants (see Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Publicity for the Belonging workshops held in Newcastle, NSW
[Source: Newcastle Herald March 2000].

Acknowledging the active engagement of the researcher in project facilitation and as part of a strategy for running participatory projects further highlights the importance of the experience researchers bring to the projects. These experiences, as well as acknowledging the implicit determination of active researchers for participatory projects to succeed, help shape the research direction and interests inherent in this thesis. They also influenced the interest in applying for the scholarship attached to the *CTP* ARC Linkage Grant.

3.3 Research context: the *CTP* project

This dissertation forms part of the *CTP* Australian Research Council Linkage Grant funded Research Project. *CTP* linked a team of social science researchers²³ from the Tasmanian Institute for Agricultural Research (TIAR) at the University of Tasmania with the National Museum of Australia and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission²⁴, organisations which share an interest in the concept of participation. For the National Museum of Australia, *CTP* informs an interest in the participatory dimensions of museum projects in relation to audience, information and communication technologies, building community relationships and collection development. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission, an institution focused on NRM issues across four Australia states and the Australian Capital Territory (see Figure 3.2), was keen to explore the participatory dimensions of cultural heritage projects and educational activities that address NRM issues.



Figure 3.2: Map of the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia's agricultural heartland.
[Image courtesy of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission].

²³The *Committing to Place* Research Team consisted of: Professor Frank Vanclay, Dr Damian Lucas, Jo Wills and Sophie Henry from UTAS, Dr Ian Coates from the NMA and Dr Ruth Lane from RMIT.

²⁴The Basin covers 1,061,469 square kilometres, which is equivalent to 14% of Australia's total area - see inset map of Australia for size comparison.

By partnering with the NMA, *CTP* offered the MDBC the opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of cultural heritage based projects that focus on environmental issues of interest and concern to communities within the Basin.²⁵ This meant, therefore, that fieldwork was undertaken within this geographic area. Further, as the NMA had a particular interest in developing projects, this underpinned the use of a case study approach in the project. The context specific parameters are particularly applicable to theoretical arguments that support case study research – particularly those of Yin (1984) who pressed the importance of using real life situations in order to test ideas.

The academic parameters of *CTP* were also informed by an interest in the social dimensions of NRM projects, museum projects and the concept of participation. The grant writers narrowed these interests into a key research question: ‘activating and maintaining community participation in natural and cultural resource initiatives in the Murray-Darling Basin’.²⁶ To help facilitate this research, the Research Team needed access to project examples. One of these, an educational activity called the *International Riverhealth Conference*, which was run by Firestarter Communication and sponsored by the MDBC, was evaluated by all members of the Research Team (Lucas et al., 2004, 2005). In addition, the NMA developed a suite of outreach projects that were collectively known as the Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project. Although a variety of projects were suggested by divisions throughout the NMA, including the Indigenous Division and the Collections Unit, only five projects developed past the conceptual stage.

An existing civics-based education project called *TalkBack Classroom* (located in the Education section of the NMA) was developed into the *Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom*, a version of *TalkBack Classroom* with an environmental focus. This one off program was delivered at the 2003 *International Riverhealth Conference*, Mildura, Victoria (Lane et al., 2005). An online community exhibition and collecting project called *Pass the Salt* was developed by the curatorial section of the NMA in partnership with the Museum of the Riverina, and exhibited stories about the social experience of salinity in Wagga Wagga, NSW (Lucas, et al., 2005; NMA, 2005: website). The Public

²⁵ This fits in with the MDBC Human Dimensions Strategy (Murray-Darling Basin Commission, 1999).

²⁶ The Australian Research Council Grant application was prepared by Professor Frank Vanclay and Dr Ruth Lane, in association with Darren Peacock (National Museum of Australia).

Programs section ran series of workshops in conjunction with *CrocFestivals*²⁷ in communities around Australia, including Moree (NSW) and Swan Hill (Vic) in the Murray-Darling Basin. These workshops, run by hip hop artists Morganics, WireMC and Finton Mahoney, aimed to collect stories about living in regional Australia and resulted in fourteen audio tracks and seven video clips (NMA, 2004) recorded on a DVD and CD called *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm*. Conceptual development of a cultural mapping project that linked information from cultural institutions with NRM institutions was also planned. Despite great interest from both the NMA and the MDBIC, however, this project did not succeed in developing past the planning stage due to conceptual problems, staffing shortage and difficulties with technology. Finally, and most significantly for this research, the Public Programs division developed and delivered an online digital photography project called *Basin Bytes* that aimed to engage communities to take images and write stories for an online exhibition about communities of place. *Basin Bytes* was conceived and designed by staff within the Public Programs Division of the NMA, with additional assistance regarding the technical dimensions of the project from staff in the ICT Division, and was delivered in four different communities across the Basin (Wills, 2003, 2004b; Wills et al., 2004a, 2005a; NMA 2005: website)

Initially, these projects were managed jointly by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Land and People Divisions at the NMA. The ICT dimensions were originally to be a key focus for the Linkage Grant research. This focus shifted over time, however, and the final project report for *CTP* analysed the social dimensions of participatory museum projects in relation to NRM issues. More specific information about *CTP* is available in a range of academic and conference papers as well as the individual project reports²⁸ and the final project report²⁹ (Lane et al., 2005a; Lucas et al., 2005; Vanclay et al., 2004; Wills, 2003; 2004b; Wills et al., 2004a, 2004c, 2005).

²⁷ *CrocFestivals* are produced by Indigenous Festivals of Australia Ltd and aim to promote education, health and culture in participatory events that include indigenous and non-indigenous youth.

²⁸ See Appendix D for a copy of the key recommendations from the *Basin Bytes Evaluation Report*.

²⁹ See Appendix E for a copy of the key recommendations from the final *CTP* Report.

3.3.1 CTP and evaluation

CTP comprise Each of the researchers in the *CTP* Research Team was involved in conducting evaluation research for at least one of the projects within the Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project.

The Research Team is using a concept of evaluation as being research for informing decision-making at all stages in project development. Engagement requires participation. Thus, the "evaluation" is an ongoing process alongside with, and feeding into, project development. At different stages, different research methodologies have been, and will be, used. Consistent with a developmental approach (formative evaluation), qualitative methods tend to be used, although we are not necessarily adverse to quantitative approaches (Vancly et al., 2004: 553).

This focus on evaluation was part of the overall project approach to develop an understanding of the 'higher purpose' of social and cultural institutions and their ability to deliver programs which address issues and topics that go beyond that of the immediate project, for example, environmental sustainability. In addition, the project investigated whether these types of programs had the ability to inspire ongoing participation in community and NRM activities. Research was designed around three major questions:

In what ways do the outreach and education activities actually engage diverse audiences? ... What methods are useful for organisations to use in developing and implementing outreach activities that are meaningful for participants? ... Do outreach and education activities enhance commitment to place, increase environmental awareness, and lead to a change in environmental behaviour? (Vancly et al., 2004: 552)

Each researcher developed an evaluation framework that addressed and refined these questions in relation to the projects, and identified which qualitative and quantitative methods would be used to collect data. All research collected as part of the CTP project was analysed using NVIVO software. Providing and producing ongoing evaluation feedback, evaluation reports and institutional presentations have all contributed to the analysis and information presented in this dissertation. Although I participated in the evaluation fieldwork for the *International Riverhealth Conference* and the Talkback Classroom Project, and developed the initial evaluation framework for the CrocFestival hip hop workshops, my research focused on the *Basin Bytes* project and it's implementation in three different communities.

3.3.2 This PhD and the CTP project

The major case study in this thesis draws upon the evaluation research I conducted for the three *Basin Bytes* projects: one in Echuca (Victoria), Wentworth (NSW) and a joint project between Goolwa (SA) and Toowoomba (Queensland). However, participating in

the research for the other projects also helped to refine the methods used in the evaluation of *Basin Bytes*. This included the use of NVIVO software to compare and contrast specific themes and findings across the projects.

As well as facilitating research on the *Basin Bytes* project, the *CTP* project also provided invaluable access to NMA and MDBC personnel, expertise and policy documents. Receiving feedback from industry professionals, as well as other members of the Research Team, has helped to both refine and clarify research directions, methodology and analysis. Further, the specific interest in NRM in the *CTP* project, underpinned by the expertise of research team members, helped to focus the research in relation to outreach activities (Baker, 1991, 1992; Lane, 2000), and integrate consideration of the social side of natural resource management (Vanclay, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2004). As a result, many of the project examples used in this thesis illustrate environmental history and NRM issues as presented in social history museums (as opposed to natural science- based museums).

3.4 Research design: methods used in this thesis

In order to address the aims and objectives of this research a range of qualitative research methods have been used. To reiterate from Section 1.4, the thesis aims to

1. To explore the participatory potential of collaborative museum outreach projects by:

- reviewing participatory theory and its relevance to debates about institutional sustainability and social relevance
- exploring the nuances within the definition of participation
- reviewing literature on museums and participatory practices
- reviewing literature from other disciplines that use participatory approaches
- reviewing the historical and contemporary understandings of participatory practices in Australian museums

2. To test the participatory potential of collaborative museum outreach projects by:

- undertaking applied evaluation research on a major case study
- undertaking research on two minor case studies that were developed by Australian museums and that specifically address NRM issues

3. To establish the credibility and relevance of participatory practices in museums by:

- identifying key concerns about participatory practices within museums
- interviewing key individuals within the Australian museum community
- responding to key questions and concerns that institutions and individuals have regarding museums, participatory practices and community engagement

4. To analyse interdisciplinary participatory practices, apply them to the Australian museum industry and develop a museum-specific participatory framework by:

- translating participatory theory into tangible practice and policies
- identifying participatory principles that can inform policy development
- recommending different ways that museums can integrate participatory processes into project development

The following list of methods is organised in relation to the different sections of the thesis and, where appropriate, outlines the selection criteria used.

3.4.1 Literature review

Research Methods

- Archival, library and documentary research and review

Selection

Apart from museum studies literature, the thesis incorporates literature from a number of other discourses. These discourses include: including material from the field of natural resource management, participatory democracy, community cultural development, community development and sense of place.

Rationale

This method relates specifically to the aims and objectives in point 1 (above). As this thesis is located within the field of museum studies, the literature survey contains a review of museum studies literature based on three chronological periods. The first, 1945-1970, reviews key texts in the post war era, analyses the rise of education and evaluation, and beginnings of a new interpretive framework for cultural heritage. The second, 1970-1995 traces the emergence of new directions in the discipline in relation to contemporary social currents including participatory paradigms, new museology, environmentalism and community diversity. The final period, 1995-2005, outlines the development of the discipline in relation to the social inclusion imperative, traces the mainstreaming of marketing, the rise of the technical museum and the implications of the emergence of the Internet. Literature from other discourses is selected on the basis of its relationship to participatory theories and practices.

3.4.2 Review of participatory projects in Australian museums

Research Methods

- Document analysis, archival and website research

Selection

In 2003, I circulated an email outlining the research parameters of the *CTP* project via AMF requesting information from specific Australian institutions (not historical societies or local museums) with significant participatory NRM/ environmental and rural focussed programs. This formed part of a domino sampling process, that also took into consideration examples and ideas found in literature reviews, research and information gathered in conferences. Although the NRM interests of the *CTP* project helped to further refine the selection process, the participatory dimensions of some projects justified inclusion in the review, which comprised the following institutions:

- National Museum of Australia, ACT
- Museum Victoria, VIC (including the Immigration Museum and Melbourne Museum)
- Living Museum of the West, VIC
- Australian Museum, NSW
- Powerhouse Museum, NSW
- Museum of the Riverina, NSW
- Kodja Place, WA
- Western Australia Museum, WA
- History Trust of South Australia
- Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame
- Queensland Museum
- Lady Denman Maritime Museum

Rationale

This method relates specifically to the aims and objectives in point 3 (above). This initial view of programs was conducted to get an understanding of the different types of Australian museums and investigate what, if any, types of participatory programs had been undertaken in Australia.

3.4.3 Participatory dimensions of museum work

Research Method

- Recorded interviews
- Analysis took place during transcription, and then cross comparison.

Selection

Interviewees from a range of Australian museums were selected by using a domino sampling technique based on response to the initial email distributed via the AMF forum (see above), from prior research experience within the museum industry, and in that evolved from the initial interviews.

Rationale

This method relates specifically to the aims and objectives in point 3 (above). These interviews were designed to augment and contextualise the research interest in participatory practices within museums in relation to current practices and perspectives of key professionals in the Australian museum field. I did not use NVIVO for the interviews I ran with museum personnel. I gathered a large volume of data, and personally transcribed each interview. During this process I marked them up by hand in relation to my key research interests (outreach, participation, use of engagement within museums, training etc).

3.4.4 Minor case studies

Research Methods

- Case study analysis
- Document analysis, archival research and literature review
- Informal interviews and communication
- Recorded interview and communication
- Personal reflection

Selection

These minor case studies were selected on the basis of their identity as museum outreach programs which focus on social dimensions of NRM. Three national case

studies, which resulted in travelling and/or online exhibitions or education programs, are contrasted with one international example. These programs include:

- *A Changing People, A Changing Land*, National Museum of Australia, 1996
- *Future Harvest a journey towards a sustainable future*, Museum Victoria, 1998

Rationale

This method relates specifically to the aims and objectives in point 2 (above). These case studies are suitable for this project because they focus on the social dimensions of NRM as depicted in the museum environment. They represent both typical and innovative outreach programming, and have thematic resonance with the major case study, *Basin Bytes. A Changing people, a Changing Land* and *Future Harvest* can be contrasted as travelling exhibitions, while *Living Landscapes* provides a useful comparative example to the outreach activities with the *Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project*. The international example illustrates the increased activity around this use of natural and cultural history to engage a range of participants.

3.4.5 Major case study: Basin Bytes

Research Methods

- Project evaluation comprising:
- Recorded interviews (with project facilitators and community stakeholders)
- Recorded audio journals (project participants)
- Recorded focus group interviews
 - Informal communications via email/telephone with project developers, facilitators and other stakeholders
- Participant observation at project workshops in communities and at the NMA
- Archival and web-based research
- Photographic research
- Narrative analysis
- Research diary (written and recorded)

Selection

The *Basin Bytes* project is part of the *CTP* project research. This project was conducted three times during candidature; and was in run communities within the Murray-Darling

Basin which were, ultimately, selected by the NMA. Presentations by members of the CTP Research Team (Lane & Wills, 2003) at the 2003 Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand in Broken Hill, however, were the impetus for engaging community interest in the project in Wentworth, NSW. The choice of a case study approach for this thesis draws on Yin's (1984) notion that context specific research provides researchers with an opportunity to investigate using real life examples. As the thesis argues that context is an integral element of the participatory state, using a case study methodology therefore appeared to be most appropriate. It also fitted into the CTP project approach as outlined above in Section 3.3.

Rationale

This method relates specifically to the aims and objectives in point 2 (above). *Basin Bytes* forms the major case study for this research for number of basic reasons. As part of the CTP project, the PhD was required to connect with the project's research activities and undertaking research on one of the projects developed by the NMA constituted this engagement. I was assigned to *Basin Bytes* because of the potential participatory dimensions of the project via its intent to engage with communities. Further, with a background as a curator, and an interest in collaborative photographic projects and storytelling, this project was ideal the research purposes of the thesis.

The evaluation carried out on these projects has been informed by the project evaluation methods adopted for the CTP project and participatory methodologies, such as action research. The evaluation has been concerned with developing dialogues with a range of stakeholders and suggesting changes to the project or raising issues of concern as the project has evolved. There are instances throughout this research, therefore, when the ongoing evaluation work has directly informed project direction and development. This brings together this sense of active researching; it enables people to articulate ideas and issues in a 'live' environment, one in which alterations to the project actually had an immediate impact.

3.4.6 Critical reflection

Research Method

- Research diary
- Recorded diary
- Informal discussion and communication

Selection

Handwritten PhD research diaries have helped keep observations and thoughts from supervision meetings, conferences, project team meetings, web searches, exhibition attendance, as well as other activities in one place. Unfortunately, one of these diaries was stolen during the second year of the research, however, immediately recalling the contents of this diary via recorded diary (with the help of a friend) helped to retrieve much of the information and identify sources to relocate materia. Informal discussions – with former museum co-workers and colleagues, and other PhD candidates – have also assisted the development of critical reflection and project refinement.

Rationale

This method relates specifically to the aims and objectives in point 4 (above) Review and self checking have been important elements of the research process. Drawing on examples from conferences or listening to others discuss their research approach, issues and progress has helped develop a critical perspective on my own research. Further, this active listening has also highlighted other dimensions and issues of interest that have not been incorporated into this research. The limited use of international museum examples, confined in general to the literature review, has been one area that could have been extended in the development of this research. These reflections have not only focussed on research limitations, they have lead to a more balanced approach to the question of participatory practices applied in the cultural sector, one that the initial research hypothesis, that museums do not fully integrate genuine participatory practices in their community engagement projects, was loathe to consider.

PART 2: APPLIED RESEARCH

Chapter 4

*The Australian museum industry:
participatory practices, perspectives and projects*

4.1 Introduction and background to participation in the Australian museum industry

Applying participatory practices and theory to project development necessitates an understanding of the local political, economic, social and environmental contexts of research and projects. This chapter, therefore, examines participatory practices, processes, perspectives and project examples in the Australian museum industry. Like museums in the international arena, Australian museums have developed in relation to the ideals outlined in the literature review. Access, diversity, inclusion, interpretation and learning have shaped the delivery of new programs and educational activities in existing organisations. They have also helped to guide the development of new thematic and community-based museums.

After briefly outlining the development of Australian museums prior to 1970 in relation to the revolutionary museum periods discussed in the literature review and identified by Van Mensch's (1995), this chapter examines the participatory dimensions of Australian museum practices from the 1970s – in relation to the New Museology and other emerging discourses. It considers the methods and approaches museums use to identify and engage communities, focusing specifically on collaborative project development. As such, the discussion excludes a detailed examination of the Australian museum visitor, audience and evaluation arena, although recognition is given to the use of formative evaluation in the development of exhibitions. More detailed consideration of evaluation can be found in the substantial contributions that Lynda Kelly (for example: Kelly, 2004; Kelly & Gordon, 2002; Kelly & Sullivan, 1997) and Carol Scott (1991, 1995, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2004) have made. Scott also acted in an advisory capacity during the development of a report to the Cultural Ministers Council called *Social Impacts of Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activities* (The Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies, 2004).

Much of the discussion in this chapter draws on project examples identified during research and fieldwork. Twenty-two key project examples that support the

discussion and analysis are listed in Table 4A below.¹ They are used to provide context to the discussion of participatory practices within Australian museums and to establish the current state of play with regards to this issue. Identifying relevant projects involved looking for relevant examples in different types of museums (state, national, local, regional, community, ecomuseum) and to ensure there was a representation of types of museum projects (outreach, exhibitions, public programs, websites, research and so forth).

It is no coincidence that most of these examples used in this section come from the larger museums – participatory practices seem to be more abundant in these institutions. However, this research acknowledges the diversity of different museums and collecting agencies in Australia, in line with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) (2004), Museums Australia (MA) (2005), the Collections Council of Australia (CCA) (2005), and as recognised by Bennett (1996), Deakin University (2002) and Stapleton (2004). As such, a number of other projects such as travelling exhibitions and educational outreach projects are also discussed and listed in Table 4B below (although for these the there is no additional information in the appendices).

¹ More details about these projects can be found in Appendix G.

Project No	Project Name	Museum/Institution	Location
1	<i>South Melbourne Oral History Project</i>	Melbourne Museum, Museum Victoria	Melbourne, Vic
2	<i>McKay Volunteer Team</i>	Melbourne Museum, Museum Victoria	Melbourne, Vic
3	<i>Women on Farms Gathering</i>	Melbourne Museum, Museum Victoria	Melbourne, Vic
4	<i>Community Access Gallery</i>	Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria	Melbourne, Vic
5	<i>Beirut to Baghdad</i>	Migration Heritage Centre Powerhouse Museum	Sydney, NSW
6	<i>Keeping Culture</i>	Australian Museum	Sydney, NSW
7	<i>Indigenous Gallery</i>	Lady Denman Maritime Museum	Huskisson, regional NSW
8	<i>Many Rhymes, One Rhythm</i>	National Museum of Australia	Canberra, ACT
9	<i>Pass the Salt</i>	National Museum of Australia Museum of the Riverina	Canberra, ACT/ Wagga Wagga, regional NSW
10	<i>Museum Resource Centre Network</i>	Queensland Museum	Regional Qld
11	<i>MuseumLink</i>	Western Australian Museum	Perth, WA
12	<i>Interpretive centre</i>	Kodja Place	Kojonup, regional WA
13	<i>Sharing their Legacy</i>	History Trust of South Australia	Adelaide, SA
14	<i>Community Collections</i>	Melbourne Museum, Museum Victoria	Melbourne, Vic
15	<i>Signature Quilt</i>	National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame	Alice Springs, NT
16	<i>Committing to Place</i>	National Museum of Australia Murray-Darling Basin Commission University of Tasmania	Canberra, ACT (Murray-Darling Basin)
17	<i>FATE</i>	Australian Museum	Sydney, NSW
18	<i>Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom</i>	National Museum of Australia	Canberra, ACT
19	<i>Custodian's Welcome</i>	Living Museum of the West	Maribyrnong, Vic
20	<i>A Changing People, A Changing Land</i>	National Museum of Australia Murray-Darling Basin Commission	Canberra, ACT (Murray-Darling Basin)
21	<i>Future Harvest</i>	Museum Victoria, Melbourne Museum	Melbourne, Vic
22	<i>Basin Bytes</i>	National Museum of Australia Murray-Darling Basin Commission	Canberra, ACT (Murray-Darling Basin)

Table 4A: Australian museums and associated projects specifically discussed in this chapter

Project Name	Museum/Institution	Location
Refined White	Australian Sugar Museum	Innisfail, Qld
Keeping Culture	Australian Museum	Sydney, NSW
Museum in a Box	Australian Museum	Sydney, NSW
Museum on the Road	Australian Museum	Sydney, NSW
Museum in a Train	Australian Museum	Sydney, NSW
Regional Hubs Project	Museum of the Riverina	Wagga Wagga, NSW
The Forum (Community Access Gallery)	Museum of Migration, History Trust of Sth Australia	Adelaide, SA
Travelling exhibition for country schools	South Australian Museum	Adelaide, SA
National Quilt Database	Pioneer Women's Hut	Tumbarumba, NSW
Museum Assistance Program	Western Australian Museum	Perth, WA
Regional Hubs Project	Western Australian Museum, Geraldton	Geraldton, WA

Table 4B: Additional projects discussed in this chapter.

Further, this research recognises the significant projects and processes that have engaged with Indigenous and diverse migrant communities. These activities and projects are an explicit example of museums responding to social change and the New Museology via social inclusion, access, equity and diversity. Indeed, they are essential components of museums' participatory practices. Throughout this discussion, 18 project examples are used to highlight programs that include participatory dimensions. Approximately half of these projects relate to the social dimensions of natural resource management (NRM). This reflects the focus of the research grant to which this thesis was attached as well as my personal interest in renewed consideration of the potential for participatory museum projects in NRM.²

Four major sources of material are used to facilitate this discussion:

1. 16 recorded interviews with key informants from the Australian museum industry (Appendix A)
2. informal conversations and emails with museum workers (Appendix F)

² See Section 3.3, Chapter 3.

3. 18 examples of museum projects at various levels of the participatory spectrum (Appendix G)
4. secondary sources and historical information³

The interviews with key informants were recorded specifically for this dissertation, and thus constitute original source material. A number of museum workers have contributed their thoughts and ideas by means of more informal communication, such as email and personal conversations. The ideas and perspectives offered during these interactions and interviews have been central to the development of this research and are thus included below.

4.1.1 'Learning by looking': Australian museums, education and information dissemination prior to 1970

Prior to the changes wrought by the post World War II period and the emergence of the New Museology, the Australian museum industry reflected the socio-cultural organization and interests of the colonial period. This aligns with Van Mensch's (1995) first revolutionary period (and incorporates the first and second periods highlighted in the literature review) in which museum education, industry professionalism and modernisation prevailed. In the nineteenth century, museums and other smaller collections (such as the Swan River Mechanics Institute in Western Australia) emerged as "part of the ethics of progress" (Griffiths, 1996: 18). They represented the beginnings of 'civilised' society and the new democracies in the new colonies. Archaeology, anthropology and natural history dominated Australian collecting interests. Taxonomic displays and research into evolution and social Darwinism reflected colonial ideals, interests and knowledge structures (Griffiths, 1996; Bennet, 1996, 2004). In the colonial and international exhibitions of the late nineteenth century, these interests expanded to include technology and scientific machinery, which reflected the impact of the industrial revolution. Rather than illuminating the human dimensions of colonisation, however, Gore (2002) argued these collections were compiled and used as representative of empirical dominion. Although access featured strongly in the form of exhibitions and events, one can argue that these colonial conditions meant

³ See Chapter 3, Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3.

society was neither conducive to, nor perceived a need for, an inclusive agenda in terms of formalised and participatory practices.

Australian museums developed on a state by state basis, and like their counterparts in Britain and Europe, evolved from private collections. Their principle concern during the mid-late nineteenth century was to develop collections and disseminate their research findings. Australia's first major museum, the Australian Museum (founded in Sydney, NSW in 1827), for example, was developed initially to procure "rare and curious specimens of Natural History" (AM, 1999: website). These specimens related mostly to natural science and Aboriginal material. A significant hurdle during this period, according to Kohlstedt (1989), was for the collectors of these specimens (chiefly the naturalists who dominated the collecting field) to recognise and overcome the conflict of interest that their own collections represented in relation to those they were gathering for the public museums. As noted previously, increased interest in scientific principles of knowledge and the professionalism of the museum industry limited public involvement in museums other than as audiences and recipients of information. This enshrined, Griffiths (1996: 18) argued, "the principle of learning by looking" as opposed to the learning by doing that has been advocated by contemporary and transformative educationalists and practitioners (Friere, 1970; Mayo, 2003).

Dissemination of museum-generated information did occur during this time. Australian museums in the late nineteenth century, Kohlstedt (1989) noted, emulated British museums by creating collection catalogues, surveys of species, systematically ordering exhibits of natural history and ethnological collections, and delivering public lectures. In 1851, for example, Edward Forbes from the Museum of Practical Geology and School of Mines in Great Britain, delivered a lecture entitled *Educational Uses of Museums* which focused on the benefits of handling specimens for collections and the general education value of museums for the public (Kohlstedt, 1989: 4). In some cases, other organisations (communities of interest and practice) used collections used specifically for educational advancement:

In states with active local organisations such as the networks of Schools of Arts in Queensland and the Mechanics Institutes in Victoria and South Australia, some museums made specimens available for educational programs ... The museums became, too, a place where regional and local groups, particularly field naturalists, could hold meetings, use the collections and library, and promote their activities (Kohlstedt, 1989: 16)

The passive nature of the educational experiences museums offered was criticised by William Stanley Jevons, a distinguished British scientist who visited Australia during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although increased public access to cultural information illustrated the potential social usefulness of museums, Jevons wanted this social usefulness to take visitors beyond the experience of learning by looking (Jevons, 1883; Bennett, 1996). He argued that youths interested in natural science learnt more by creating their own mini collections which they could then compare with those in museums, and that those interested in how things were made would be better off visiting factories than looking at inanimate objects in glass cases (Jevons, 1883). Despite Jevons' observations, however, it is in the realm of educative exhibits that the first tentative steps towards the integration of participatory ideals occurred – in accessibility of museum information and the development of educational and learning activities.

The notion of social inclusion was not prevalent during this period. Indeed, the period could be considered more exclusionary when it came to staff or the integration of community ideas. This exclusion was also a result of social divisions, with particular regards to gender and race (Anderson, 1993; McAlear, 1996; Trotter, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). Museum work during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period, Anderson (1993) observed, was largely the domain of 'amateur gentlemen scientists'. Women were mainly kept to the role of visitors, while, as Bennett (1996: 11) provocatively commented, "Aborigines were admitted only as dead specimens". Thus the idea of access to a collective mindset and identity met with a variety of barriers - at structural, intellectual, civil and social levels.

Further, the idea of a colonial network of museum organisations to oversee educational strategies and to ensure information was publicly accessible was more than just professionally unimaginable, it was politically and geographically impossible as well. Prior to Federation, the notion of a formal and unified colonial museum network was untenable. This is particularly the case when one considers

the collection of Australian Aboriginal material culture. Indeed, one could argue that museums, as colonial institutions, were implicitly involved in a form of cultural hegemony that at once legitimised the collection of Indigenous material and distanced itself from recognising the material's inherent connection to place and people (Gore, 2001, 2002; Healy, 1997). This, according to Gore (2001: 39) was indicative of collectors seeing Aboriginal material "as any other kind of flora and fauna ... as either a curiosity or as constituting part of the natural history of the continent". Further, any collective or regionalised interpretation of Indigenous material would have contradicted the colonial concept of *terra nullius* (McAlear, 1996; Bennett, 1996; Griffiths, 1996):

'Terra nullius' created a legal foundation for the popularly-held scientific opinion that Aborigines occupied an earlier and lower rung on the evolutionary ladder ...

The work of early museum custodians reflected the moral, intellectual and political ideas of the times, and so Indigenous societies were generally discounted as a distinct arena of knowledge in museums where the natural sciences reigned supreme (McAlear, 1996: 80).

In addition, detailed research into Indigenous cultural heritage and land ownership would have required recognition of oral testimony and history, an approach that was contrary to the historical, scientific and legal methods of the time. This issue of authority remains the subject of heated debate amongst contemporary academics, historians and museum workers, as evidenced by the review of the National Museum of Australia in 2003 (Thompson, 2000, c1994; Hoffman & Hoffman, c.1994; Goodall, 2001; Message & Healy, 2004; Windshuttle, 2001, 2003; Macintyre & Clark, 2003).

One can argue that the absence of a unified professional organisation to advocate for industry improvement formed a barrier to the potential development of organised participatory processes and programs, access and educational activities. The idea of a centralised national cultural facility for material culture, in an Australian context, has always been fragmented and contested – in terms of both Indigenous cultural heritage and national cultural heritage and identity. By the time the Australian states federated in 1901, talk of a national museum prompted most of the state museums to guard their collections fiercely (NMA Amendment Bill, 2000). Further, in the context of the White Australia Policy that emerged after Federation, it is clear that recognition and representation of diverse communities and cultures other than as *other* was limited (Said, 1978). When one

reflects upon the various dimensions of museum-related participatory practices (inclusion, accessibility, diversity, interpretation and learning), therefore, only access, learning and information dissemination were developing during this period, and then only in a minor capacity.

Anderson (1991) argued that until the advent of contemporary social history in museums, models for exhibition and research within Australian museums remained largely unchanged (apart from those at the Australian War Memorial). This view reflects the assessment of industry-based changes by former Director of the Australian Museum, Des Griffin (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #10):

Museums for most of their history have really been an agent of and determined by the higher echelons of society who would have considered that they were here to teach you. It's only in the last 30 or so years that museums have become interested in learning, which basically means studying what people do when they visit museums (my emphasis).

Apart from the work of Kohlstedt (1983), Webber (1987), Gore (2001) and Robin (2003), which addressed the issue of museums and Australian national identity, there is, as Bennett (1996) suggested, limited scholarship focussing on Australian museums during the interwar period.⁴ Yet, while the absence of information hinders an in-depth assessment of significant participatory-based industry developments during this period, there has been sufficient discussion of the industry changes post 1970 to suggest that any participatory processes or developments were minimal at best. Gore's (2002; 2001) insights are useful, however, when considering the limited material representing non-Indigenous experience and the creation of stories about national identity and the human experience of settlement. Of interest, too, is Bennett's (1996: 12) use of Spring's (1994) research to analyse the development and expansion of the Australian museum industry:

'86% of the 237 museums for which dates are known were established after 1960' ... 46% of Australia's existing museums were established in the 1980s ... The past thirty years has seen the establishment of what now amounts to a significant number of museums focussing on the social, cultural and technological history of 19th and 20th century Australia (Spring cited in Bennett, 1996: 12).

⁴ It should be noted, however, a detailed investigation into this period has not been carried out as part of this thesis.

4.2 The New Museology and Australian museums

The assertion that the Australian museum industry underwent significant change during the 1960s aligns with Van Mensch's (1995) second revolutionary period (the third identified in the literature review) – the New Museology. Museum industry developments in Australia since the mid 1960s show a clear link to this emerging discourse, as well as to the development of practices reflecting democracy, inclusion and learning.

These developments, however, must also be considered in the context of the frenetic social, environmental, political and economic change that occurred during this era. Social change, for example, began when the Commonwealth Electoral Act gave Indigenous Australians the right to vote in 1962. In 1968 the “Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established as an affirmative action to implement support schemes for the advancement of the interests of Aboriginal people” (Australian Electoral Commission, 2005: website). These changes were significant, although as Gardiner-Garden (1996-7: website) noted, one would be unwise to interpret them as “changing forever the social and political relationship between Aborigines and non-Aborigines”. In 1973, the Whitlam Labor Government abandoned the divisive White Australia policy that had been employed since Federation, thus making way for developing policies and social reform that recognised the multicultural dimensions of Australian society. The International Year of Women in 1975 was closely followed by the International Decade of Women 1976-1985, and brought women's history into the spotlight. Environmental perspectives were influenced by a growing environmental movement, an awareness of the impact of expansion and increasing levels of extinction. They were also substantially altered when the United Nations established the UN Environmental Program and held the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972.

At a political and economic level, Australia felt the effects of the global oil crisis of 1973. Increasing commodity prices, rising unemployment and inflation influenced the introduction of alternative approaches to economic management. These, according to Aitkin (2005), demonstrated the shift from direct government

intervention (advocated by John Keynes) to the more entrepreneurial and market driven economics (advocated by Schumpeter and, more significantly, by Milton Friedman). In addition, the Hawke Labor Government deregulated the financial system and floated the Australian dollar in 1983. These changes also illustrated a shift away from government driven nation building activities, an issue that has influenced the way the Australian museum industry has developed (Aitken, 2005).

The social and political climate in which the New Museology emerged and took shape, therefore, provided an agenda around which fresh and alternative approaches to museum-based activities, history, representation and interpretation could be developed. Yet it also coincided with an era in which the relevance, governance and management of museums and cultural heritage was to be hotly debated. As such, these changes have also influenced the development and practice of participatory processes and principles within the Australian museum sector. This progressive potential, therefore, must be considered in relation to the provision of government policies and infrastructure as well as the philosophical principles of the New Museology.

4.2.1 The Pigott Report and the National Museum of Australia

Although Mr Arthur Woodward, Director of the Art Department at the Bendigo School of Mines in Victoria, made a zealous appeal for a national museum after Federation in 1901, Australia was still without a national museum in 1970 (NMA Amendment Bill, 2000). Since then, however, the Australian museum industry has been influenced by a series of Commonwealth government reports, initiatives, councils and Royal Commissions. All of these have addressed, to some degree, issues of access, inclusion and preservation, and have argued for more equitable representation in terms of gender and ethnicity. These concepts have appeared in museums as dimensions of social research and interpretation, and can be linked directly to the emergence of the New Museology.

In 1973, the Whitlam Labor Government created the Australian Committee of Enquiry into the National Estate, an initiative that culminated in what many believe to be the most influential document in the Australian museum industry, the 1975 Pigott Report (Griffin, 2003; Committee of Inquiry on Museums and

National Collections, 1975). This report recommended an overhaul of the Australian museum landscape to consolidate knowledge and resources via the establishment of an Australian Museums Commission. It also advocated for the development of a series of national institutions, including a national museum, a national maritime museum, a national aviation museum and a gallery of Australian biography (Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, 1975). This reflected a form of government intervention in the creation of national institutions that was at once directive and transformative.

The recommendations and ideas outlined in the Pigott Report stimulated the imagination of many Australian museologists and drew criticism from others. Griffin (2003: website), for example, embraced the ideas and philosophy within the report, and wrote “none of this positioned museums as dull, unchanging temples in which to worship the truth as we wanted to believe it was ... Instead adventure, curiosity, theatre.” Other museologists, such as Anderson (1991) considered the report’s advocacy for new national museums from a feminist perspective, and argued the symbolic ‘big history’ stories were contradictory to the nuances of the burgeoning social history movement. Despite these differences, the Pigott Report represented a significant shift in museological management and planning. Indeed, one could argue that it was a tangible example of museological revolution. It formalised and legitimised the new museology in relation to the proposal for a most public and significant institution, a national museum for Australia (Van Mensch, 1992).

The Pigott Report’s vision for an Australian national museum (or Museum of Australia as it was then called) clearly identified a place for people and the environment in a format that went beyond the customary natural science approach. This vision focused on human interaction with and impact on the environment:

The new national museum should not attempt to imitate or duplicate those fields in which the older Australian museums are strong, but should concentrate on three main themes of galleries: Aboriginal man in Australia; European man in Australia; and the Australian environment and its interaction with the two named themes (Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, 1975:).

For a national museum not to focus on natural history was a radical shift from the traditional configuration of museums and was possible, in part, because the state-

based museums already had substantial natural history collections. An in-depth exploration of the complexities between Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people and their relationship to the environment was pivotal to the report and subsequent Charter's vision for an Australian national museum (Commonwealth of Australia, 1983; Foster, 2004).⁵ Highlighting the need for popular cooperation and stimulating displays, the report also urged museums to tackle controversial topics, evoking Tilden's (1977) belief that provocation was a key component of the interpretive process.⁶

Significantly, a separate legislative section for the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia within the Museum of Australia Act (Part II Section 5) legitimised the importance of including Indigenous Australians in the collection and representation of Australian history. Indeed, it acknowledged the thousands of years of Aboriginal inhabitation in relation to the 200 years of European settlement. This was particularly significant because it recognised the intrinsic role of Aboriginal people in the national story, and formally confirmed the value and importance of employing them as staff members and experts:⁷

the Council shall pursue a policy directed towards securing ... the development and maintenance of the Gallery, and the exhibition of historical material referred to in subsections (2) and (3), by persons who are Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders or descendants of Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders.

The public programs section in the Report of the Interim Council (1982: 44) expressly identified broad community participation as a desirable feature of the new museum:

⁵ The Charter for the Museum of Australia was introduced in the 1982 Report of the Interim Council. The five point Charter was used in the report "as a basis for recommendations that would translate the concept of the Museum of Australia into a physical reality" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1983: 4).

⁶ This is interesting in the light of the 2003 review of the NMA, only two years after it opened. The review was conducted by four members of a government appointed panel, none of them historians. It included a critique of the interpretive dimensions of indigenous history and the settlement of Australia and questioned the nature of historical narrative appropriate in national museums. The ensuing report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003) caused consternation amongst the Australian museum profession and the issues were fiercely debated by scholars in the museum and history fields. Although detailed discussion of this development is outside the scope of this dissertation, one could argue that the review findings contradict those recommendations in the Pigott Report that championed a creative, provocative approach to developing museum displays and material. See Commonwealth of Australia (2003), Message & Healy (2004), McCarthy (2004).

⁷As it developed, an advisory board, in conjunction with the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, was established to assist with indigenous issues and consultative methods. In addition, an affirmative action policy has ensured employment of Aboriginal curatorial staff.

Just as museums have changed, so have the organisations and activities of museums and friends of museums shown great advances and changes over the last decade. The Museum of Australia will be equipped to take advantage of changes in *public participation*, such as those likely to result from changing patterns of employment. The organisation will include *extension services* enabling the Museum to maintain contact with a community far wider than who are able to visit it (my emphasis).

Despite the progressive nature of the proposals for a new museum and the subsequent legislation, a consolidated approach to community engagement has remained peripheral. This has been due, in part to the issue of curatorial authority as well as to delays in the development of the museum itself. The *Museum of Australia Act* was established by an Act of Parliament in 1980. Although staff were appointed and minimal infrastructure ensued, major work on the museum did not take place until the 1990s. One could argue, however, that the approach to environmental and social history in the Pigott Report and subsequent Charter laid the foundations for the NMA to integrate a more participatory approach into the development of the environmental narratives that have since emerged. In addition to the work in the Gallery of First Australians, contemporary NMA projects, including the major case study discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, have presented stories and material from a variety of sources, all of which combine to represent a multi-faceted view of environmental history. These projects include: *A Changing People, A Changing Land* (Baker & Lane, 1993), *Tangled Destinies* (Smith, 2003) and *The Murray-Darling Outreach Project* (Vanclay et al., 2004).

4.2.2 Access, education and preservation: new initiatives for managing moveable material culture

As noted above, one of these recommendations in the Report of the Interim Council for the development of the Museum of Australia – “that the Museum of Australia be opened in 1990” – did not come to fruition (Report of the Interim Council, Museum of Australia, 1982: ix). What occurred in the intervening period was interesting in the context of the change of Commonwealth Government in 1983, and in relation to the ongoing debates about the social value and relevance of museums (Weil, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002; Hein, 2000, Witcomb, 2003; Sola, 2001; Carr, 2003).

At the end of the 1980s, two Commonwealth Government departments developed reports that discussed museums in relation to performance management and accountability. The first, *What Price Heritage?* was authored by the Commonwealth Department of Finance in 1989. In this report, performance measurement for museums were to relate to 'effectiveness, efficiency and economy' (Rentschler & Potter, 1996: 105) – in brief, within the auspices of performance review of for-profit organisations (Department of Finance, 1989; Rentschler & Potter, 1996). This approach, however, was challenged by the Department of Arts, Environment and Territories who replied to this report with *What Value Heritage?* in 1990. This response reflected more on the question of how not-for-profit organisations should be measured. It also considered the social value of museums and heritage, an issue which reflects discussions about the cumulative benefits of museum activities, and, one could argue, participatory principles and practices. In this context, Rentschler & Potter (1996) drew on Ames' (1989) argument that organisational mission should be the foundation upon which performance measures are developed and that a balance was needed between financial efficiency and service to the public. This debate was an interesting precursor to the museological literature and discussions about institutional sustainability and viability that emerged during the next decade.

These delays also hindered the Pigott Report's other major recommendation – the development of an Australian Museums Commission. The Commonwealth Government did not establish a Heritage Collections Working Group (HCWG) until 1989, and during the intervening period, history museums, with their large volunteer constituency, stagnated. Once activated, however, the HCWG explored the value of heritage collections to the broader public, the need to develop a coordinated approach to the management of moveable cultural heritage collections, and coined the term and concept 'Distributed National Collection'. This was an implicit recognition of the significant material culture held in museums of all types around the country (HCWG, 1993; Griffin, 2003; Anderson, 1991). It was a holistic approach that enabled the working group to develop a picture of the industry at a national level.⁸

⁸ In a dynamic keynote address at the Museums Australia National Conference, however, Kylie Winkworth (2005) argued that the only national survey of collections is the National Quilt Register developed by volunteers at the Pioneer Women's Hut in Tumbarumba, NSW.

In 1993⁹, the HCWG's report recommended the establishment of a new Heritage Collections Committee as the primary body responsible for implementing three priority programs: "a national database for heritage items ... establishment of interstate touring programs for non-art museum materials and collections ... [and a] national conservation program" (HCWG, 1993: 16-20). These programs guided the work of the Heritage Collections Committee and its successor – the Heritage Collections Council (HCC) 1996-2001. Accessibility, broader education and preservation were integral to these programs. Recognition that the majority of the distributed national collection was in the care of voluntary organisations and dispersed across the country highlighted the need for programs that promoted best practice conservation and collection management procedures in an practical format, and has resulted in numerous influential publications, such as *Be Prepared* (HCC, 2000), *reCollections* (HCC, 2000) and *Significance* (2001). This disseminated material has been backed up by a range of support services offered by some of the state museums and the state branches and chapters of Museums Australia (Inc).

In 2002, another influential sector review, *A Study into the Key Needs of Collecting Institutions in the Heritage Sector* (The Key Needs Study) (Deakin University, 2002), led to further industry changes, including the establishment of the National Collections Advisory Forum in 2002 and the Collections Council of Australia, which was inaugurated in September 2005. Consultations with sectors of the museum industry were conducted as part of *The Key Needs Study*, and the research findings identified access and preservation as ongoing issues for museums. Like preceding reports, accessibility was discussed principally in relation to collection management issues, although outreach featured more prominently throughout this report, the major context for this appeared to be the provision of conservation services, training and advice. Significantly, however, *The Key Needs Study* explicitly recognised the pressure for museums to remain relevant, and also acknowledged the interpretive challenge that the industry was facing. Accessible and well cared for collections would not be able to sustain the industry in the long term if they were not perceived as useful, relevant and

⁹ During 1993 the Council for Australian Museums Association nationalised as a body and became Museums Australia (MA). Each state had a branch, and a national branch was set up in Canberra.

pleasurable social institutions. Thus the report recognised that in Australia, a different model of dissemination was needed to invigorate the industry, distribute and deliver information, and equip and empower those in regional locations with skills, training and expertise.

4.2.3 Diversity, equity and inclusion: expanding research, representation and interpretation into project examples

The introduction of the new social history into museum history departments provided opportunities to collect and interpret migrant histories, working lives and women's histories, and reinterpret, represent and manage Indigenous histories. Diversity, equity and inclusion have been guiding principles in this representative shift, and have influenced the policies developed by Museums Australia Inc governing cultural diversity (2000), gay and lesbian issues (1999), Indigenous issues (1996, 2005), sustainability (2003) and women's issues (2000), although it is interesting to note that there is not a community engagement policy at the MA level. Further, prior to the development of these policies, Anderson (1993) argued that women's history had been only just visible due to the dearth of material evidence or creative interpretations within displays. Drawing on experiences at the Pioneer Women's Hut in Tumbarumba NSW for example, Hucker (1993) argued that a lack of familiarity with this approach at a community level was initially a barrier to inclusive representation. Hucker lamented the humility of farming families who "saw history in terms of the famous, the rich, men and city people. It was simply inconceivable to the women that their forebears could be represented in a museum" (Hucker, 1993: 26).

Thus the need for creative interpretation was particularly necessary with regards to women's history. Collections of domestic 'technology', initially acquired to represent technological evolution, became a vehicle through which to reassess women's work in the home (Dale, 1993; Anderson, 1993; Twigg, 1993). One Australian practitioner, for example, Liza Dale-Hallett, Senior Curator at Museum Victoria, has promoted creative research and interpretation in relation to women's history in the vast collections held by the museum. Dale-Hallett has used collaborative and participatory approaches to develop a number of projects, methodology that reflects an interest in increased accessibility, inclusion and

community projects. These projects include the *South Melbourne Oral History Project* (see Appendix G example 1), the *McKay Volunteer Project* (see Appendix G example 2) in which former factory workers helped interpret the collection, the development of a proposal for a travelling exhibition called *Future Harvest* (see see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2), the interactive *WaterSmart* home project, and the collaborative collection and research project that documents the *Women on Farms Gatherings* (see Appendix G example 3).

Interestingly, Dale-Hallett's commitment to feminist interpretation of history has been augmented by an interest in environmental sustainability. Many of the projects she initiated have drawn on participatory principles and explored the human dimensions of NRM and labour. Dale-Hallett feels this interest in rural and environmental issues is seen by many as "unsexy" and somewhat peripheral to the concerns of a museum located in metropolitan Melbourne:

I think environmental issues are every bit as relevant as ... [urban issues] ... but trying to get city curators to agree with that is tricky, especially as the material which it is represented through is not seen as highly aesthetic (Dale-Hallett, 07.08.2003. PhD Interview #2).

This apparent disinterest has resulted in Dale-Hallett seeking support to develop many of the projects she has conceived from communities, funding sources and corporate agencies outside the museum.

Inclusion, diversity and equity do not only relate to the representation of women in museum collections. It is appropriate that the removal of the White Australia Policy in 1973 has been followed by research and recognition of migrant histories and collection development. These have featured strongly in state museums and collecting agencies, including the Migration Museum in South Australia, the Migration Heritage Centre in NSW and the Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria. The Migration Museum and Immigration Museum have both developed Community Access Galleries where different groups can exhibit their stories and experiences (see Appendix G example 4). The Albury Regional Museum has been connected to the interpretation of the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre, which represents a significant period in Australia's migration history, and in the personal lives of those who spent time there. Compelling exhibitions have recognised the centrality of migrant experiences in the construction of place and community,

such as the *Jews and Italians in Carlton* exhibition developed by Museum Victoria in 1993 or the Australian Sugar Museum's *Refined White* travelling exhibition which was developed to explore the history of South Sea Islanders working in the sugar industry.

At the community museum and special interest museum level, Chinese and Jewish communities have been particularly strong when it comes to interpreting their own heritage. The Jewish Museum (Vic), the Holocaust Museum (Vic); the Golden Dragon Museum (Vic); the Northern Territory Chinese Museum are just some of the examples of these community museums. Not so prevalent, as Chidiac (2005) illustrated, have been communities migrating during the second half of the nineteenth century, such as Arab communities. The inclusion of Arab Australians in museum heritage projects, and the opportunity to explore this history, however, has recently been embraced by the Powerhouse Museum and the Migration Heritage Centre through the *Wattan Project* (see Appendix G example 5). These museums and initiatives have all emerged as a result of the changing approaches to representation, research and social history.

Acknowledgement and greater recognition of Indigenous cultural heritage issues and representation has also emerged through the new museology. McAlear (1996: 79) argued that Indigenous issues were “deemed historically worthy of study precisely at a juncture when it was believed to be near extinct”. Gordon (2005: 358), however, tied the changes in attitudes toward Indigenous issues specifically to “the Regional Seminar held by UNESCO in Adelaide in 1978, entitled ‘Previous Indigenous Cultures: New Role for Museums’”. He noted that this seminar was the first contact many museum workers had experienced with Aboriginal people. More significantly, the seminar highlighted the value of employing and training Aboriginal people to manage their cultural heritage (as discussed in the previous section). This philosophy has been central to the outreach work carried out by the Aboriginal Heritage Unit at the Australian Museum (see Appendix G example 5). Further, noted Gaye Sculthorpe, former head of the Indigenous Section at Museum Victoria, changed perceptions of Aboriginal communities legitimised the inclusion of contemporary and local

Indigenous perspectives, not just traditional representations of Aborigines living in remote areas (MA Inc., 1993).

The development of a policy to guide the collection, interpretation, use and protocols regarding Aboriginal cultural heritage emerged in 1993, with the assistance of staff from the Australian Museum and Museums Australia Inc. *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* (Museums Australia Inc., 1996) recognised the role of material culture in Aboriginal society and highlighted the important issues of repatriation and restricted access to sacred material currently held by institutions. New exhibition programs and projects have been guided by many of the protocols laid out in this document and the policy that has since succeeded it: *Continuing Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities* (Museums Australia Inc., 2005). The Australian Museum, Museum Victoria, NMA and South Australian Museum, for example, have all developed substantial galleries of Aboriginal history and culture in close consultation with Aboriginal communities. In a recent addition to the Gallery of First Australians at the NMA, collaborative consultation regarding the use and interpretation of a possum skin prompted Director, Craddock Morton (03.03.2005. PhD Interview #6), to reflect:

In the Tasmanian module, for example, we had a long consultative process with community about the way they wanted to present themselves in the museum and the objects and the stories that would best illustrate that ... and I think we ended up with a much stronger display as a result.

All of these activities and policy advances, as well as the determined efforts of Fairclough (2002, 2003) in relation to access and on behalf of the vision impaired, illustrate an industry that is both cognisant and responsive to participatory principles, and indeed, some way towards achieving them.

4.2.4 Inclusion and technology: more project examples

Before moving onto an examination of the different types of museum programs in which community engagement and participation is encouraged, it is worth briefly acknowledging an aspect of the fourth revolutionary period outlined in the literature review – that which relates to technology.

Many Australian museums have embraced the internet and have developed a range of websites within the spectrum of Sumption's (2001) typology.

Information hubs are provided by Collections Australia Network (CAN), MA and ICOM Australia as well as by many museums and arts-based government agencies. Increased access to information, collection databases, online exhibitions and education material have meant that a range of people - audiences and others - have been able to engage with Australian museums like never before. This engagement is both active and passive, reflecting creative receptive categories emphasised by the Cultural Ministers Council Report (The Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies of the University of Western Sydney, 2004) as well as the different learning styles that Gardner (1996) advocated. It could involve playing *Batmania*, an interactive game on the NMA website about the founding of Melbourne, or it could involve contributing a story via the 'your story' webpage at MV *Watersmart* home project, or via the website for NMA project *Pass the Salt* (see Appendix G example 9).

Using different types of information and communications technology to collect different stories and solicit participation has been the basis of a number of projects at the NMA. For example, the NMA collects stories from audiences in-house via an audiovisual recording device in the successful *Eternity: stories from the emotional heart of Australia* exhibition which uses an interpretive style that mirrors the thematic focus of historian Theodore Zeldin's work (1993, 1995):

In a radical departure from the usual categories of museums, *Eternity* is based on 10 themes that speak directly to people's real experiences. These themes of Joy, Hope, Passion, Mystery, Thrill, Loneliness, Fear, Devotion, Separation and Chance provide a new angle on Australian history. Each theme features five stories, each anchored by one significant object. Innovative multimedia techniques are used to tell the wider story (NMA, 2006a: website).

Further, one of the driving forces behind the *Murray-Darling Outreach Project* that forms the basis of the *Committing to Place (CTP)* Research Project has been to develop ICT-based projects. A number of these, *Basin Bytes*, *Pass the Salt* and *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm* (see Chapter 6 and Appendix G examples 8 and 9), have used the web as a presentation device, a form of cyber exhibition panel via which to convey community ideas and stories. *Basin Bytes* (discussed in Chapter 6) and the *Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom* (see Appendix G example 18), however, utilised the web to facilitate the project itself, the latter involving a web broadcast interview between students in Mildura and former Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson who was in the NMA studio in Canberra (Lane et. al.,

2005; Wills, 2004). Technology, therefore, is another conduit that museums can use in their pursuit of access, inclusion and diversity, even though one must remain cognisant of the limitations and impersonal nature of the medium itself, and the vital role that personal and face-to-face interaction plays in building communities and projects.

4.3 Museum practices, process and participation: outreach, collaborative exhibitions, collections, public programs, research and evaluation

Museums engage with different types of communities via their many programs and activities. The vast majority of this interaction occurs at the audience level, however, different sections and functions of museums utilise and engage with community-based expertise and knowledge in a variety of ways.

Education, for example, is a key component of museum work that requires a participatory mindset and dimension. But, just as Tilden (1977) recognised that interpretation for children must be different from adult interpretation, so too this thesis makes a distinction between adult learning and school based education. The different dimensions of this participatory experience and engagement techniques for children as well as the vast nature of the education and learning arena, however make it impossible to address within the confines of this thesis.¹⁰ Further, the large number of volunteers working in Australian museums should be considered and acknowledged in the context of the participatory agenda. In the census of June 2004, for example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that 20,443 people contributed a total of 343,139 hours to museum-based volunteer work (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005: website). This substantial contribution is even greater when one considers that many of the community museums and historical societies have no paid staff, and rely on entry fees and grants to fund their activities. The need for changed circumstances in this regard was made forcefully by Winkworth (2005: 2):

While libraries, galleries and archives are generally managed by paid staff, and have relatively well documented collections, volunteers run most of our museums and their collections are not well documented. Unless there is a major program of investment, museums in regional Australia will be left even further behind, and their communities will lose their stories and an irreplaceable part of their identity.

Winkworth's lament is not unfounded. Indeed, it highlights an issue that is often left in the shadows. How do we understand and value the community engagement and participation upon which museums rely to develop their innovative programs

¹⁰ See the literature review in Chapter 2 for a discussion of the general issues inherent in museums and education.

and stories, or document and care for collections? Developing an understanding of the social impact of museums is, as Scott (2003, 2004) suggested, one way of starting to recognise the intrinsic worth and value that museums contribute to social and cultural life. It is also recognition, as Director of Museum Victoria, Dr Patrick Greene, reflected: “of the power of good in museums” (Greene, 08.03.2005. PhD Interview #15). It is necessary, therefore, to interrogate the different dimensions of museum work to identify just exactly where participation and engagement occurs. This, perhaps, will not only shed light on the different ways museums work with communities, but also help advocate for their recognition and refinement.

4.3.1 Outreach and participation

Outreach activity in Australian museums has been dominated by the state and larger regional museums, although a number of community museums develop travelling exhibitions and deliver innovative public programs (see Appendix G examples 8 and 15). The vastness of the Australian continent and the diversity of the Indigenous and migrant populations make outreach a logical method for the national, state and regional museums, as well as administrative museum bodies such as Museums Australia (Inc.) and the Collections Council Australia, to use to engage their constituent communities and audiences.

The concept of outreach has been pivotal when considering the needs of the Australian museum industry at a national level, as illustrated by the work undertaken by the HCWG, the Heritage Collections Council and the current Collections Council of Australia. Indeed, the three programs recommended in the 1993 HCWG report explicitly recognised the importance for museum programs to occur outside traditional museum spaces and were based upon outreach principles. The Australian Museums On-line project (which has since become the Collections Australia Network) engaged with emerging technology and used the omnipresent cyberspace as its venue. The touring and travelling exhibitions initiative recognised the importance of objects, information and learning embedded within a traditional outreach program. Further, the need for regional training and advisory services to disseminate collections and conservation information has been reflected in publications developed by the Heritage Collections Council. These

programs engaged with communities at a practical level: they have provided programs with which to interact as well as those from which they can learn.

There is, however, no uniform definition for outreach in Australian museums. Expanded outreach programs are seen as positive by many museum workers, such as Carol Scott, Evaluation and Visitor Research Manager at the Powerhouse Museum and former President of Museums Australia:

a lot of museums now are involved in massive outreach programs. I think the whole notion of outreach is saying rather than people having to come into a large state cultural museums ... The whole thing is about actually supporting regional, local and specialist museums in the self-management of their culture. I think that is another form of participation which is not about us saying come and help us develop this exhibition here at this very large state/commonwealth museum but which is saying you have a cultural centre in your own town and we're going to help you manage your collection better, interpret the collection that you have, brand and give profile. I think that is another form of participation (Scott, 04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8).

Yet some professional museum workers avoid the term outreach altogether. Martin Hallett, former Curator of Primary Production and Deputy Director of Museum Victoria, although a staunch advocate of the concept is critical of the term:

Outreach is a word I have a negative reaction to ... [it] implies a handout in a sense ... and it can be condescending. It's a consumer transaction where as I think museums are not about selling commodity, they are much more about helping people to grow, helping a community to understand itself. To that extent I like more interactive models where there is engagement and participation (Hallett, 07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13).

This latter approach is, to some extent, pursued by the NMA, which has an outreach strategy but delivers its outreach activities via different departments throughout the museum rather than via a dedicated outreach department (NMA, 2005). Perhaps this is because of the difficulty inherent in defining 'community' for a national museum, as suggested by Gore (2002) who drew on Anderson's (1983) notion of a national community being an imagined community. The NMA strategy defines outreach as "a wide range of activities including print and electronic publishing, public and schools programs, and community-based projects and travelling exhibitions" (NMA, 2005). It categorizes outreach principally in relation to its audiences and the ensuing geographical responsibility of its national status:

programs and activities generally experienced away from Acton which connects the Museum with local, regional, national and international audiences. This includes print and electronic publishing, public and schools programs, community-based projects and travelling exhibitions (NMA, 2005: 4)

Many state agencies also outline their outreach activities in a geographical context rather than as outreach per se, and deliver their programs to regional areas and communities. The Regional Services Manager at the Powerhouse Museum, Rebecca Pinchin, for example, outlined her role as:

coordinating the *regional* programs and services. A lot of what the museum does that would normally be called 'outreach' occurs within the metropolitan area of greater Sydney and that is not necessarily my concern (Pinchin, 04.03.2005. PhD Interview #10, my emphasis).

This approach reflects government imperatives and agendas, and influences many of the major state museums, including Museum Victoria's Discovery Program. According to Discover Program Manager, Sarah Edwards (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #14),

The state government is the driver in terms of saying this is the nature of the work we think you should be fulfilling and our agenda is regional Victoria ... That drives the development of programs and the focus on regional Victoria. The issue of access and equity are buzzwords that the government lays down and ... Museum Victoria's business and strategic plans reflect that. The outreach program delivers on those ... strategic outputs.

Queensland's Museum Development Officers in the Museum Resource Centre Network also deliver services to regional communities (see Appendix G example 10). Unlike other states, however, the Museum Resource Centre Network is a collaborative initiative of three bodies (Arts Queensland, Queensland Museum and a consortium of Local Government Authorities), and the Museum Development Officers are regionally-based (Trantor, 03.02.2006. *Pers. Comm.*; Warden & Scott, 2004). In this model, although the Museum Development Officers cover large distances to service their clients, 'the Museum Resource Centres are viewed as a hub in the provision of cultural heritage services [and] ... can offer a quick response time to clients because of regional siting' (Warden & Scott, 2004: 4).

Demand for services and assistance is at once an indication of the program's success and demonstrative of its problems. Although Mohr (2001) and Warden & Scott (2004) have clearly demonstrated the benefits of the program for regional cultural development and recognised the place-based significance of the program, Robinson (2001) foresaw the limitations caused by an inability to adequately

Museum	State	Outreach Program Name¹³	Object-Based	Information-Based	Activity-Based
Australian Museum	NSW	Aboriginal Heritage Unit Outreach Program		x	x
Australian Museum	NSW	Museum in a Box	x		
Canberra Museum & Art Gallery	ACT	N/A (travelling suitcases)	x		
History Trust of South Australia	SA	Community History Unit	x	x	
History Trust of South Australia	SA	Migration Museum	x	x	
Museum & Gallery of the Northern Territory	NT	Regional Museums Support Program	x	x	
Museum Victoria	Vic.	Museum Victoria Discovery program	x		
Museum Victoria	Vic	Roving Curator Program		x	x
National Museum of Australia	ACT	N/A (run via education, public programs &/or curatorial)		x	x
Powerhouse Museum	NSW	Regional Programs and Services	x	x	
Migration Heritage Centre	NSW	N/A (virtual project)		x	
Arts Queensland/Queensland Museum	Qld	Museum Development Officers/ Museum Resource Centre Network	x	x	x
Queensland Museum	Qld	Queensland Museum Loans	x		
Queensland Museum	Qld	Country Loans Services	x		
Queensland Museum	Qld	BioBus Project	x		
South Australian Museum	SA	Outreach education via Ingarndi Aboriginal Cultures Gallery			x
South Australian Museum	SA	'Out of the glass' Roadshows	x	x	x
South Australian Museum	SA	Discovery education cases	x		
South Australian Museum	SA	Travelling exhibition for country schools		x	
Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery	Tas	Animal Loan Collection	x		
Western Australian Museum	WA	Museum Assistance Program	x	x	
Western Australian Museum	WA	MuseumLink			x
Western Australian Museum	WA	Loans centre with themed collection boxes	x		

Table 4C: Breakdown of outreach projects run by Australian state museums: object-based, information-based and activity-based.

The major differences in outreach services are between those states that provide support/advisory services to regional communities (Western Australia, Queensland, NSW, South Australia and Northern Territory), and those that deliver pre-defined or prepared programs to various communities (Victoria and Tasmania). Training and advice adheres to best practice as outlined by HCC publications, MA (Inc) training material and university-based museum studies

¹³ Excluding online education projects.

training courses (McShane, 2001). Pre-defined programs are developed for a range of different communities, including schools in remote areas, aged care facilities and people with disabilities. Thus, different types of communities are the recipients of these types of activities. While both programs take into account the needs of communities of place, those institutions orienting their outreach programs to advisory services tend to work more with a specific community of practice (museums, historical societies, keeping places), whereas those that focus on program delivery concentrate on communities of interest, which is more akin to an audience base.

Object-based outreach in Australian museums

Since the majority of museum activity derives from collections, one could argue that the object category is too broad to usefully illustrate the type of program being developed. In an outreach context, it can, perhaps, be more accurately categorised as those programs that incorporate object-based education element, such as the themed collection boxes and reminiscence programs (see Figure 4.1). A particularly good example of these is the *Museum in a Box* program developed by the AM which several different boxes (see Figure 4.2). The reminiscence programs run by MV's *Discovery Program* are themed programs which are based on de-accessioned collection material and presented to audiences by trained museum personnel. Themed collection boxes, however, are also distributed to teachers with kits for use in the classroom (see Table 4D and Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Many of these types of outreach activities derive from the education sections of the museum, and thus focus on primary and secondary school groups and learning objectives and curriculum strategies.

Museum	State	Outreach Facilities
Canberra Museum and Art Gallery	ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection suitcases available to schools
Australian Museum	NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum in a Box – themed collections boxes (Previous activities included Museum on the Road and Museum on a Train)
Queensland Museum	Qld.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Museum Loans & Country Loans Services – themed collections boxes
South Australian Museum	SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovery education cases
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery	Tas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal Loan collection available for school groups
Museum Victoria	Vic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum Victoria Discovery Program – reminiscence programs, themed collection boxes
Western Australian Museum	WA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Themed collection boxes and Loan Centre

Table 4D: Themed collection boxes and reminiscence programs in Australian state museums.

incorporate a regional advisory service as part of their activities (Edwards, 07.03.2005. PhD Interview #14). It should be noted, however, that the Indigenous cultures section has a roving curator who visits and Aboriginal museums communities throughout Victoria.

Dedicated assistance programs, as outlined in the general section on outreach above, include the Western Australian Museum's *Museum Assistance Program*, the Powerhouse Museum's *Regional Services Section* and Queensland's collaborative *Museum Development Officers and Museum Resource Centre Network*. Other advice services are run through the Regional Support Program at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the *Community History Unit* at the History Trust of South Australia. The Australian Museum's Aboriginal Heritage Unit also provides significant advisory and information outreach services (see Appendix G example 6).

Knowledge and skills acquired in this area have enabled volunteers and workers in community museums to control their intake of material, use electronic collection management systems, develop preventative conservation management procedures and better understand their collections. The Museum Development Officers are engaged in advising and assisting local museums and heritage networks to care for and develop their collections. Expertise available at the local level facilitates a greater sense of connection to the local community, more familiarity with the collections and cultural heritage issues, and overcomes social divisions embedded in the psyche of the urban–regional divide (Deakin University, 2002). Some of these assistance programs include internships, such as the Powerhouse Museum's *Regional Internship Program*, which offer participants intensive and hands-on training opportunities and thus fulfil the participatory criteria of learning by doing. Further, although materials conservation could be classified as an object-based program, there is a strong argument for this being information-based given that it is conservation advice and assistance as opposed to conservation work per se that is usually sought.

A number of museum workers have argued that the focus on collection management expertise and information dissemination will not sustain the museum

industry nor will it engage diverse communities in the broader context that participatory theory suggests is possible. Winkworth (2005: 2) bemoaned the emphasis on collections training outreach:

Such prescriptions are inward looking, and risk museums becoming more focussed on internal policies and procedures, rather than connected to the communities we hope will support the museums. We need to lift our aspirations for this sector so that volunteers and their communities can celebrate their distinctive identity and history, using the collections for new creative, educational and cultural endeavours.

Further, Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13) reflected:

I think all of the professional support [community museums] have been given has come from middle management and staff in ... collection management and similar roles. They have given a level of leadership to the sector which is very professional in orientation. If you look at Museums Australia's training programs you'll find dozens of 'cataloguing your collection' programs or 'working with collections' programs. There are a much smaller number of programs that are about 'engaging with community' or 'working with local government' – processes for working with the layers of the community. In fact, it seems to me, that the failure has been for curatorial expertise in museums to provide leadership in the sector, to encourage thinking in a creative manner.

Engaging people in a creative process, however, is a very different exercise to the dissemination of materials or the delivery of 'how to' programs. It requires a form of active engagement in process, as well as a shared vision for a project. This requires a collaborative mindset, ongoing interaction and active interrogation of the objects, whereas the collection management-based training is focussed primarily on the collections administrative management and conservation of material.

Activity-based outreach in Australian museums

Although travelling exhibitions utilise objects and their principle aim is to disseminate information, they also promote a different mode of learning, as illustrated by the travelling exhibitions developed for country schools in South Australia. All of the large institutions have the capacity to generate travelling exhibitions, however, only the SAM mentions travelling exhibitions as an integral and ongoing part of its outreach program.

The AM has a history of developing travelling shows based on in-house exhibitions. *Museum on the Road* exhibition program, which is no longer operating due to funding limitations (Kelly, 05.03.2005. PhD Interview #12), and

*Museum on a Train*¹⁴ took information and activities out to regional communities in NSW, and used a locally-based coordinator to oversee and staff the exhibition, make links with community groups, book in school groups and so forth (Bell, 1991). Bell (1991: 4-5) outlined some basic principles for undertaking this sort of outreach work as needing to “have a framework in place to ensure the smooth running of the program ... Be flexible ... Find the right coordinator ... Expect the unexpected ... Be open to new ideas ... Be available and contactable”. She also outlined the benefits for the museum and the community in undertaking this type of work, recognising that the outcomes and needs for these different stakeholders were separate. This was an important distinction - although the relationships made could provide the basis for future projects, understanding the different requirements was essential.

Many of the travelling exhibitions that form the basis for this type of outreach activity are developed in-house.¹⁵ For example, the NMA developed a travelling exhibition that focussed on craftsmanship called *Rare Trades*. The research drew on a book produced by Thompson (2002) who had previously (and independently) undertaken the research with suitable individuals. Although the exhibition was designed and built by a private exhibition company (Mothers Art), the curatorial content was overseen by NMA staff and a complete exhibition was available for hire after its initial showing in the temporary exhibition hall at the NMA. Foster (2004) has argued that there is potential for the NMA to develop further partnerships with state-based institutions to build a more vibrant and active travelling exhibition program. Such collaboration, from Foster’s perspective, would enable the NMA to access the rich collections of the state museums and support the state institutions at the financial and production end.

Collaborative travelling exhibitions with non institutional groups and communities, however, have been developed by a number of museums.

¹⁴ The Museum on a Train concept mirrors the Victorian Department of Agriculture Better Farming Train which visited rural Victorian centres between 1924 and 1935. The Better Farming Train exhibited and promoted the latest farming technical developments and methodologies (breeding, growing) and contained an education and domestic technology carriage to cater for the needs of women in rural areas (Wills and Hodges, 2006; Department of Natural Resources and Environment website (On-line resource), 2000).

¹⁵ Notable exceptions are the NMA’s *A Changing People, A Changing Land*, Museum Victoria’s *Future Harvest* exhibition and the Western Australian Museum’s *Sustainability* exhibition. The first two projects are explored in more detail in the following chapter.

Environmental sustainability has been a key theme for these types of collaborations. The NMA (*A Changing People, A Changing Land*), MV (*Future Harvest*) and WAM (*Sustainability WA*) have all developed exhibitions addressing NRM issues in the context of the sustainability debate. A key feature of these exhibitions is the integration of personal stories and experiences to represent the human dimension of environmental and agricultural issues. These stories are often developed in close consultation with different place-based (regional) communities or case study farmers. Further, different regions are often encouraged to develop complementary exhibitions to the major exhibit. In this way, the local history of the area can be displayed and addressed in the context of the broader environmental issues (see following chapter for a detailed examination of two of these programs).

Other types of outreach activities derive from museum education departments. One recent example is the NMA's *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm*¹⁶ project which the public programs and education sections developed in association with the Department of Health and Ageing school-based *CrocFest* program (Cultural Perspectives Pty. Ltd, 2002) and well known hip hop artist Morganics (NMA, 2006; NMA, 2005; Lucas et al., 2005). This program engaged Indigenous and non-Indigenous school aged participants attending *CrocFest* in collaborative hip hop workshops to develop rap songs about living in regional and remote areas (see project example box 8). Story collection formed part of the rationale for the NMA's engagement in this program.¹⁷ Important, too, however, was the use of a creative medium to engage students in the discussion of environmental issues. Informal observer and CTP project member, Sophie Henry, commented on the educational aspects of the project:

¹⁶ As two of the venues for *CrocFest* were within the Murray-Darling Basin (Swan Hill, Victoria, and Moree, NSW), *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm* also came under the auspices of the *Committing to Place* project. Although an evaluation framework was developed, detailed research into the project was limited due to the number of partners already engaged in the project, and the predominantly educational focus. See Lucas et al. (2005) for a brief summary of the project and evaluation issues.

¹⁷ *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm* has been compiled into DVD format, integrated into galleries within the NMA and is also available online: (NMA, 2006 website).

The workshops provide an active learning experience consistent with a multiple intelligence pedagogical framework (Gardner 1993). The hip-hop genre also provides a kinaesthetic connection with language and is engaging on a number of different levels. Theories involving the necessity to provide active learning experiences, as opposed to traditional didactic methods, hold a high level of currency in the educational field at present. The use of multiple intelligence frameworks, particularly in regard to notions of inclusivity and equity, is also a concept widely familiar to the teaching profession (Henry, 2004: 6).

Thus the participatory and creative nature of this project had the potential for transformative and active educational experiences.

4.3.2 Exhibitions and participation

The previous section briefly addressed the collaborative nature of travelling exhibitions, drawing particularly on those with an NRM theme. Many in-house exhibitions in state museums also incorporate collaborative and consultative dimensions. This is clearly demonstrated by the galleries of Aboriginal history and culture at the NMA, MV, SAM and AM, and in the community access galleries at MM and MV (see project example box 4). It is also demonstrated in the WAM's *Museumlink* project which provided an avenue for community generated rapid response displays in relation to contemporary issues (see project example box 11). Aboriginal galleries aside, however, Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13) believes that "what we haven't yet realised is that the same dynamic can be utilised in our main displays".

These dynamics are not always easy to negotiate, nor are they appropriate in every instance or program. A number of curators feel that community participation at this level is more difficult if the subject matter is of a general nature. In the context of telling national stories about the environment, Senior Curator for *People and the Environment* at the NMA, Matthew Higgins, reflected on the difference between in-house galleries and regional projects in terms of community participation:

The galleries are under our control, but out there we are really in the community's hands and we can only offer some guidance ... I see them as very, very different: you're offering something to a community; you're not trying to direct or instruct. You definitely don't want to be seen as a martinet, because you just won't get the participation and the result (Higgins, M, 2005. *Basin Bytes* Project Interview)

For many museum workers, public involvement in the development of exhibition topics occurs at an evaluative level – both formative and summative. As noted

above, this type of interaction has been explored at length by Kelly (2002; Kelly and Gordon, 2002; Kelly and Sullivan, 1997) and Scott (1991, 1995, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2004), but this is a different kind of engagement to the consultative and participatory processes in which people actually work on the development of the exhibitions themselves. Nonetheless, the use of evaluation to ascertain the appropriate representative method to explore a topic was highlighted by Greene (08.03.2005. PhD Interview #15).who drew parallels between an example from his previous position at Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, UK and the work Museum Victoria does via the Bunjalaka Indigenous gallery and program:

We developed an exhibition there called Fibres, Fabrics and Fashion, which was about that fundamental industry that built Manchester ... we went into a very extensive evaluation process for the exhibition and included talking to lots of people who had worked in the industry and lots of people in other groups, for example quilt making people. It was quite humbling, because you soon realise that every single person who comes into that exhibition has an expertise in textiles – when they get up in the morning they put their clothes on ... they've made choices however poor a choice of colour they might have!

Everybody had different bits of expertise, so a good exhibition is one that allows those bits of expertise to be placed in a bigger context. In an exhibition like that, you come across many people who can contribute to the knowledge of the organisation. So, actually capturing their knowledge is quite challenging to do but is something that enriches the museum. That applies here, in this museum, where in Bunjalaka, actually capturing or in the collections, we have established good protocols with Aboriginal groups across Australia.

Collaborative exhibitions are also a feature of smaller museums where the local place-based community might be more heavily involved in the museum itself. This draws on the ecomuseum approach, and is in evidence in Australia at Melbourne's Living Museum of the West (MLMW) in Maribyrnong and at the Kodja Place in Kojonup in south Western Australia (see project example box 12). Participation has been a guiding principle at MLMW, not only in relation to developing exhibitions, but with regards to the establishment of the museum itself. MLMW Director, Peter Haffenden, has written at length about the museum's participatory objectives, even its beginnings (1994; 2005). Haffenden highlighted the interest in oral history as the stimulus for the development of a number of exhibitions, including *Back In Your Own Backyard* (Haffenden, 1994). Former MLMW employee, Chris Healy (1991: 160), however, criticised what he considered to be less than participatory or collaborative dimensions to some of MLMW's activities or its beginning, and argued that the museum was:

a site at the intersection of cultural, political and economic tendencies which were not of its own making. The museum was formed by demands from beyond history: demands generated in and beyond the region and harnessed to a cultural project.

Thus Healy challenged the perception that participation has been the foundation stone upon which the Living Museum of the West was built by suggesting that the socio-political climate was ready and looking for a venue in which to practice an alternative approach to historical representation. Indeed Healy's criticisms challenged the sense of hierarchy that he perceived was inherent in the Living Museum's approach to its activities despite the participatory ideals that were attached to the concept of the project.

Collaborative exhibitions are not just the product of institutions and smaller community groups. They are often the result of funding initiatives and partnerships, such as the History Trust's *Sharing their Legacy*, a project developed in conjunction with the Department of Veteran Affairs. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission, for example, has worked with the NMA over a number of years to develop a range of projects, including travelling exhibition, online exhibitions and education projects (see Chapters 5 and 6). These partnerships often bring different types of communities together in ways not previously imagined, and thus have a spin off effect of extending the knowledge, skills and reach of various organisations (Lucas et al., 2005).

4.3.3 Collections and participation

In a number of the projects already mentioned, such as the South Melbourne Oral History Project, the McKay Volunteer Project, the collections are the basis for much of the frontline community engagement work. The collection of oral history, for example, has been a major conduit for museum-based engagement. Collections-based engagement often occurs at the volunteer level via collections management and cataloguing activities. It also occurs in relation to conservation, as illustrated in the earlier section on outreach.

In the pursuit of greater accessibility and engagement, a number of Australian museums are opening their collection storerooms to the public. This reflects, in part, the inability of many larger museums to exhibit their vast collections.

Scienceworks at Melbourne Museum, for example, has held volunteer run storeroom tours for a number of years, while Scott noted an evaluation project at the PHM revealed the public's interest in gaining more access to collection storerooms (Scott, 04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8). A number of institutions are also allowing specific groups access to collections, such as Aboriginal people and migrant communities. This access, and in some instances repatriation, promotes a sense of inclusion as well as acknowledging prior ownership of material, and thus enhances the interpretive dimensions and potential of collections.

More recently, community-based collectors have featured in a range of museum-based exhibitions. Recognising the intrinsic sense of worth and pleasure collecting gives many individuals reflects the inclusive aspect of participatory practices.

The different types of collecting activities undertaken by many institutions also reflect the participatory ideals outlined in this thesis. Women's history, migrant history, Indigenous history and environmental history have all featured strongly in the collecting rationales developed by the larger and smaller museums alike. Indeed, one needs only to look at the priorities of the NMA, and the ensuing debates about representation, to understand that a more inclusive approach to story collecting and telling is a vital part of their work.

4.3.4 Public programs and participation

Public programs are developed in museums in conjunction with exhibitions and collections, and can be considered part of the museum world's response to the need for increased access and programs that relate to a wider range of audiences.

Australia has an active museum public programs culture. MV's *Community Collections Program*, highlighted in project box 14, is an excellent example of a public program. In addition, floor talks, theatrical performances, lectures and seminar series are all considered within this milieu. Different types of communities participate in these programs. Many public programs are developed to enhance an exhibition or local event. NMA public programs staff developed an elaborate range of activities to coincide with the *Extremes: Survival in the Great Deserts of the Southern Hemisphere* exhibition in 2005. MV developed a creative

selection of public programs to coincide with the Commonwealth Games, including *Hedge-mony* [sic], an outdoor performance installation involving the creation of a human maze (MV, 2006).

While the vast majority of public programs are audience-based, a number are more specific. One can consider, for example, the NMA sponsored conferences, such as the *Negotiating Histories Conference* (1999), the *Frontiers Conflict Conference* (2001), or the *Senses of Place Conference* (2006), as servicing and soliciting participation from the academic community. Many of these conferences have resulted in substantial publications or contributions to both the academic and broader community. An interesting symposium developed recently by the NMA related to its own history in order to commemorate 25 years:

Twenty-five years after the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980* was passed and five years after the Museum opened to the public, the National Historical Collection has grown to over 200,000 objects.

In reality the National Historical Collection is a cluster of collections, some with their origins 80 years or more before the creation of the National Museum of Australia and each with its own imperatives and idiosyncratic history.

This one-day symposium will explore the evolution of the National Historical Collection, the shifting climate of collecting, and the stories of the collectors behind the collections.

During the symposium, we will launch Australia's newest online scholarly journal on museology and material history, *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia* (NMA, 2005: website).

Public programs are not only the domain of the larger institutions, however. A number of regional and community museums use public programs to draw in a variety of audiences and participants. One of these, highlighted in project example box 15, is a direct reflect of the way museums can use public programs to promote and assert a participatory and inclusive agenda.

4.3.5 Research and participation

Participation in museum research occurs at a number of levels. One of the most prominent in larger museums is volunteer collection-based research, as exemplified by project example boxes 2 and 14 – *the McKay Volunteer Project* and *Sharing their Legacy Project*. Much of this work occurs in museum collection storage areas or within archives or libraries. In smaller museums, however, volunteers often conduct a range of collections-based research activities, including oral histories and general research. This is at once in contrast to the scientific professionalism required in the nineteenth century and representative of the

inclusive nature of museum work. Further, as Winkworth (2005) argued, it is illustrative of the important work that goes unacknowledged and unpaid (in comparison to other industries).

Museum research is also undertaken on a voluntary basis by a range of students and postgraduate candidates. PhD candidates, postdoctoral fellows and other scholars feature strongly in the museum research arena. As noted above, many museums work collaboratively with academic or special interest organisations on particular research projects, and Australian museums are no different in this regard. Prior to changes and developments influenced by the new museology and new social history, much of this research-based collaboration occurred in the natural history arena. Formal research collaborations have evolved to include a wide range of topics, and have been made possible, in part, because of government and Australian Research Council (ARC) funding, as exemplified by *CTP*. Yet although collaborative in nature, not all of this research can be considered participatory. *Human elements: a cultural history of Australian weather*, for example, involves a range of scholars investigating “the experience of weather in Australia between the 1880s – 1980s” (Human Elements, 2005: website). While this project is funded by an ARC Linkage Grant and is a collaboration between the NMA, the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian National University’s History Program, Research School for Social Sciences and Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, the research undertaken has not adopted a participatory approach to the research methodology.

The participatory nature of museum research activities thus is more than the collaborative partnerships between institutions: it relates to the types of research that is undertaken, the person or people undertaking the research and the subject matter itself. The major case study in this thesis, for example, involved project participants in the research process as well as the project itself, and this gave them the chance to think and reflect on the project and their experiences in a manner that is substantially different to the project itself. As part of the *CTP* project, this contributed to the recommendation regarding the integration of evaluation in project development as it benefits not just the institution but the participants themselves. In this way, research projects can help shape, guide and caution

institutions in their professional and project development. Another project illustrative of this participatory approach is the *Future of Australia's Threatened Ecosystems Project (FATE)*, initiated by the AM (see project example box 17). Researchers involved in this collaborative investigation aim to have more than just recommendations, they aim to contribute directly to the economic viability and resilience of industry, particularly in relation to the harvesting of kangaroos.

Thus one needs to reflect on the level of agency involved in the research process as well as the beneficiaries of the research when one reflects on the participatory dimensions of museum research.

4.3.6 Evaluation and participation

As noted above and in the literature review, the field of evaluation and visitor research has flourished over the last ten years. In an Australian context, this is particularly true, indeed Lynda Kelly, Head of the Audience Research Centre at the Australian Museum believes the extent and quality of Australian museum evaluation is on par with international standards. The evaluation and visitor research special interest group of MA is very active and could be termed a community of practice –indeed, a number of collaborative projects have ensued from this group, including the *MARVEL* project which investigates what tools are useful to measure visitor learning in museums (AMARC, 2005). This clearly has a participatory dimension from an audience perspective, as do many museum programs that are developed in an on-site context.

The holistic approach many museums use to develop programs was highlighted by Scott (04.03.2005. PhD Interview # 8):

My experience of museums is that the development of a program or exhibition is a relatively complex process and that advice, whether it comes from consultation or from something formal like audience evaluation and research, is only one of the many factors that effect the development of the program.

Further, Lynda Kelly (05.03.2005. PhD Interview #12) pointed to the learning process that occurs amongst exhibition developers and curators during formative evaluations:

There is nothing more powerful than when you get a bunch of people who are working on a project to go to a focus group and listen to what people have to say. What they find that happens is there is a one way mirror... you've got the project team there and what they are doing is that they are listening to that but they are also having this amazing conversation themselves."

The other thing it does, when I do qualitative work with focus groups for example and we have to present them with project material ... it really makes them focus. So what they get out of it is that they get some feedback but it also really forces them to confront what it is they are doing and who it is they are doing it for.

Kelly has also drawn attention to the constructivist dimensions of learning in the museum arena. By investigating different visitor learning experiences, Kelly has integrated discussions of learning into the evaluative process as a key indicator of the success of programs and exhibitions. Her innovative evaluation research, including participatory style evaluation whereby visitors take tape recorders with them as they wander through the museum, has contributed substantially to a more detailed understanding of the ways and means by which people learn in museums (Kelly, 05.03.2005. PhD Interview # 12).

Ongoing qualitative evaluation of collaborative museum programs, however, is more elusive, even in the larger institutions. This absence relates to limited resources and the fact that few evaluation departments employ more than one staff member. This reflects the argument in this thesis that not enough attention is paid to the transformative potential of participating in museum project development. The focus tends to be on visitor related issues, as is the case at the NMA, where evaluation research for projects other than those in-house is out-sourced. For this reason, the evaluation carried out as part of the *CTP* project is particularly significant as it focuses on the process, development and delivery of projects developed in an outreach capacity. Further, as 'research for informing decision making' (Vanclay et al., 2004: 547), it is an express recognition of the changed nature of evaluation and its capacity to engage a variety of stakeholders in project development. This perspective has been discussed in the variety of project reports and journal articles that have been developed as part of the *CTP* project:

Rather than the domain solely of experts, evaluation is now seen as a participatory approach that empowers and builds capacity within institutions and programmes. Evaluation is a form of action research that informs project/programme design. This shift in the concept of evaluation, however, creates certain problems. It blurs boundaries between the evaluator, programme developer, and participant. Furthermore, while evaluation has become concerned with process, it needs to remain mindful of purpose. We still need to ask the question of whether the purpose, and the higher purpose, are being achieved (Vanclay et. al, 2004:547).

4.4 Participation in project development in Australian museums: a critical perspective

The previous section clearly shows that the participatory ideals of access, diversity, equity, learning and social inclusion have been embraced by many Australian museums and museum practitioners. The list of project examples in Appendix G is a testimony to this, as are some of the other activities outlined above. This list, however, should not be considered representative. It is the result of substantial sifting through information, and even in this context, many of the projects have not incorporated engagement strategies and selection processes that equate to the participatory dimensions outlined by some other discourse, such as those used in NRM. One should also bear in mind that for every one of the projects in Appendix G, substantially more are developed in-house in a non collaborative capacity. This in itself is not cause for alarm – museums develop a range of different programs, many of which rely on fast turn around or other types of information and presentations. But it is something on which to reflect and a dimension of museum work that will benefit from critical review.

The development of policies and publications, particularly in relation to Indigenous heritage and Indigenous communities, is tangible evidence of an industry with a favourable disposition towards engagement and participation. In reality, this has to be the case when institutions rely on visitor numbers for survival. Yet at a project development level, one could also ask whether papers and policies are enough to ensure that engagement practices value, integrate and reflect different communities and perspectives. It is pertinent to reflect how and whether we know the difference, and when or whether this occurs.

Further, one could argue that apart from the *Ask First* publication (Museums Australia Qld., 1998), there is limited assistance for museum workers who are undertaking collaborative projects to learn about the processes of collaboration. Marginson's (1993) ladder of access and inclusion did not feature in any discussions, nor did it appear as an influential model. Some of the interviewees for this research felt that many museum workers are not sufficiently engaged with museological literature and theory. Clearly other issues arise if this is the case, but

"There's not enough time" is always referred to, which really means I don't place the sort of priority on this activity that you do. There is always time for everything, it is a case of choice of how that time is utilised. So, if an organisation or individual says there is not enough time it tells you a lot about their attitude. In museums, to forgo that opportunity makes it, in my view, a poorer museum as a result. The reason I say that is because, over the last decade, there has been something of a revolution in museums, from the 'we know it all and will give it to you because it's good for you' to one where it is acknowledged that the people who come through the door do not come through as empty vessels.

This comment needs to be considered in context. Greene took a broad view of defining community as "anyone who comes into contact with the museum in any way", and thus those people 'coming through the door' could easily be considered project participants as opposed to audiences. The two groups are connected, however, and Fairclough (2002: 4) argued strongly for this in relation to consultation: "the long term benefit [of greater community consultation] is exhibitions that are truly representative and accessible to an increased audience which at the same time more accurately portray the history of our nation".

Understanding the potential and impact of museum programs, the essence of Fairclough's message, is also central to Scott's (2003, 2004) work in the field of impact assessment. She has challenged the museum industry at a broad policy level to consider museums as having economic benefits and the ability to build capacity, communities, human capital as well as the potential to "contribute to social change and public awareness" (Scott, 2003: 305). This notion of impact assessment clearly has a participatory dimension; indeed, it is an implicit recognition of the transformative capacity of museum work. Further, embedding this research in an evaluative framework supports the arguments of Vanclay (2004) and Kelly (2004) who have both made cases for evaluation research to be considered at a more fundamental level in terms of program assessment and development.

4.5 Concluding remarks: participatory practices, perspectives and programs in Australian museums

This chapter has provided an historical overview of the Australian museum industry, presented the participatory dimensions at work within Australian museums and critiqued these in the context of broader literature and theoretical ideas. It has also drawn on project examples in Appendix G to underpin the ideas and types of participatory projects developed in Australia. These examples will be referred to again in this thesis – in the next chapter as this discussion moves from this more general overview into discussion of participatory NRM related museum programs, and in the penultimate analysis chapter as part of a museum related participatory spectrum.

The Australian museum industry clearly has a healthy regard for the development of ethical programs and pursuit of participatory ideals. Embedding these in every day practice, however, seems less straightforward, and it is the lack of guidance in this area that is the specific concern of this research. One of the major issues appears to relate to the way the industry understands process, outcome and performance measurement. If more detail were paid to project development processes, and more value was placed upon these, then the potential and benefits from participatory museum projects have the chance to substantially increase. Thus one returns to the need to reconsider the degree to which museum projects serve as a promotional tool for museums or as a service for the different communities that constitute the museum public.

Chapter 5

*Participatory museum projects and the
human dimensions of natural resource management: minor
case studies from Australian museums*

5.1 Introduction: participatory museum projects and the human dimensions of natural resource management

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for, and overview of, the way Australian museums have devised projects that integrate the human dimensions of NRM into their interpretation of the environment. In particular, the chapter considers how Australian museums have addressed this topic by using participatory practices and principles to develop these projects.

The first section briefly examines the way environmental issues have been addressed in the context of participation. It is not intended to be a history of environmental interpretation in Australian museums – such a task would require much more detailed research and analysis. Rather, it identifies interpretive and methodological changes wrought by the introduction of historical and sociological paradigms to a topic dominated by scientific perspectives during the 19th century.¹⁸ Although these changes originated in more traditional disciplines, such as history and sociology, they have influenced museums significantly, particularly from the 1970s onwards. As such, one can argue these expanded disciplinary parameters influenced the ideals inherent in the New Museology, and have legitimised different, as well as participatory, interpretive and representative frameworks.

The second section considers two travelling exhibitions as minor case studies. These projects were selected on the basis that they were Australia outreach projects that combined a focus on NRM with participatory practices. Each project is considered in relation to its participatory dimensions and the communities in which they were developed. Particular reference is made to the method of project development, delivery and venue location. As such, this section draws on a range of source materials, including fieldwork diaries, oral history interviews, exhibition research, images, website material, informal discussions with project developers and other secondary research materials.¹⁹

¹⁸ Although natural science and natural history are terms often used interchangeably, this thesis uses 'natural history' in an acknowledgement of the museum context for this subject.

¹⁹ One of these case studies, *Future Harvest*, has been discussed in both the Preface and Chapter 3. Having worked on this exhibition, I had access to considerably more primary research information and data than for the other case study.

This description is followed by a critical discussion of the projects, including an overview of issues and factors inherent in these programs and the institutions from which they have emerged. There are tangible links between the case studies in this chapter and *Basin Bytes*, the major case study discussed in detail in the following chapter. As such, some of the issues and analysis in this chapter can be viewed as a contextual precursor to the more in-depth evaluation and discussion of the *Basin Bytes* project.

5.2 The human dimensions of NRM in Australian museums

Museums have long addressed environmental issues, such as evolution and biodiversity, via their collections of natural history, species surveys and taxonomic research and display cabinets (Bennett, 2004; Davis, 1996). Australian museums are no different to their international counterparts in this regard. Historical analysis of Australian museums and mechanics institutes during the nineteenth century, illustrates the origins and development of collections and institutions in the context of science and natural history (Kohlstedt, 1989; Robin, 2002; Fennessy, 2005; Gore, 2001; Rasmussen, 2001). These collections provided society and scholars with invaluable information and research material. Yet they were often acquired and exhibited in a manner that rendered nature and environment as isolated from society and culture. This sense of nature as ‘other’ reflected, according to Gore (2001), a colonial mindset, one that saw the Australian environment as something to be dominated. Within this notion of dominion, there also was a sense of the educative function of museum collections. Thus it is the role of museums as education providers rather than environmental interpreters that must be initially examined to get a sense of how they engaged with these issues other than via natural history specimens.

5.2.1 Agriculture and applied learning in late 19th century

Australian museums

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, museums began to acquire and build collections/models of agricultural machinery and material culture that reflected innovations in agriculture and production. Like natural history specimens, items were ordered according to the discrete classifications that had emerged under the influence of the Enlightenment. They were classified by design, designers, and the implications they had for the agricultural industry in terms of profitability and development rather than in relation to environmental sustainability. Museum Victoria (2006: website) notes former director, Frederick McCoy, commissioned the construction of models of agricultural equipment in the 1860s, however, Rothenberg & Hoffenberg (1989) showed that specimens and raw materials featured more prominently than agricultural technology innovations in the Australian displays at the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia.

Further, the significant wax fruit and vegetable collection²⁰ of the Industrial and Technical Museum (which opened in 1870 and is now Museum Victoria), and which was displayed at the 1880 International Exhibition in Melbourne, illustrates the colonial interest in promoting raw materials and associated manufacturing processes (Museum Victoria, 2000) (see Figure 5.1). While these collecting and model-making activities reflect the colonial interest in production and development, one can argue, retrospectively, that these collections were vehicles via which museums could eventually address issues relating to environmental management.²¹

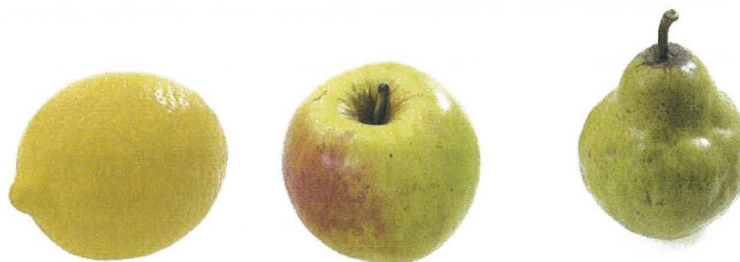
The participatory dimensions of the way museums have addressed this subject are, however, in evidence. In an Australian context the Industrial and Technological Museum, is pivotal to this discussion, and two examples are used to illustrate this. At one end of the spectrum, the wax fruit collection was developed and used to promote the idea of learning by looking prior to the introduction of colour photography. Interestingly, its development shows women were engaged in selected areas of behind the scenes museum work:

The idea of learning through simple observation helps explain the remarkable realism of the first wax fruit and vegetables produced by the museum ...

Trained modellers, mainly women, worked in the museum laboratory and employed special methods to capture in wax a specimen's natural appeal ...

As a scientific tool, the models were used to record which conditions affected the quality of the fruit, and which type of processing was suitable. Every detail of the original was recorded, including mould, bruises, and the colour subtleties of seasonal hues...

The museum placed the models on permanent display for the education of the general public, particularly students and horticulturalists (Museum Victoria, 2000:1-2).



**Figure 5.1: Three examples of wax fruit. Photographer John Broomfield.
[Museum Victoria, 2000: website]**

²⁰ The wax fruit collection was part of the Economic Botany Collection.

²¹ Such an interpretive slant is clearly influenced by contemporary approaches to environmental history and cannot be seen as representative of colonial collecting interests per se. See next section for an overview of the impact of environmental history on the way museums represent and interpret the environment.

In contrast to this observational learning, Fennessy (2005: 46, 59) argued that the Industrial and Technological Museum was a vehicle for teaching the “master, the journeyman and the apprentice” the “utilitarian knowledge” required for the application of science to industry.²² This was particularly relevant, she argued, because of the lack of practical and vocational adult education facilities during the preceding decade.

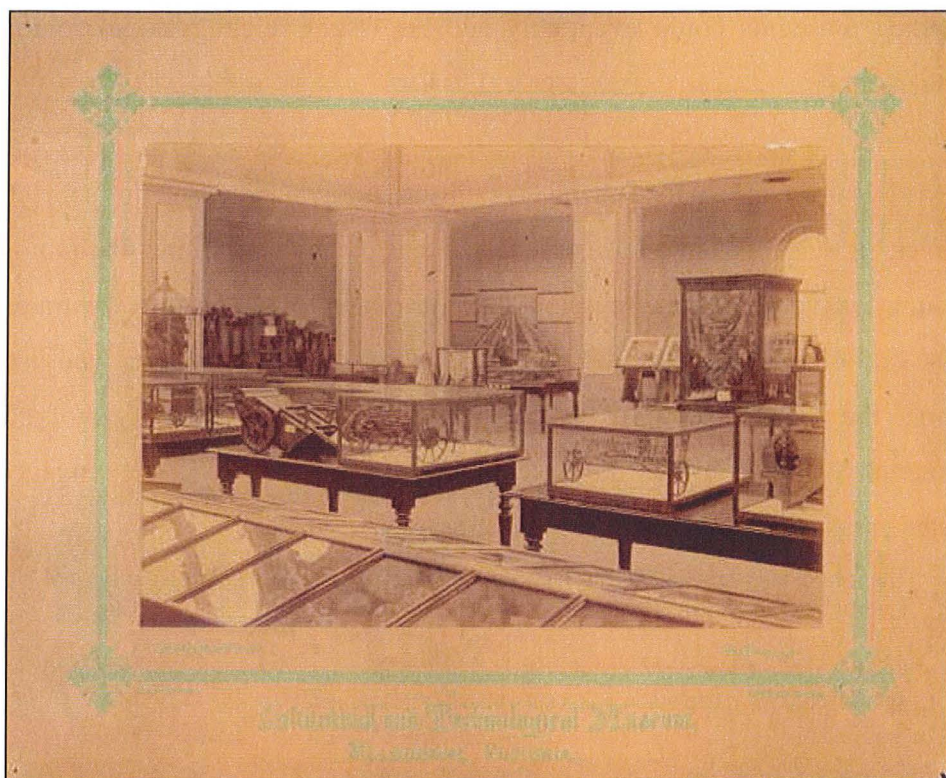


Figure 5.2: Farming equipment and produce displays at the Industrial and Technological Museum, 1872. Photographer Charles Nettleton [Image courtesy State Library of Victoria, 2006: website].

In addition to agricultural literature, shows and society meetings, social interaction and experimentation were vital learning mediums for those working on the land (Fennessy, 2005; Raby, 1996).²³ What the Museum was able to provide was applied technical education in an accessible environment by means of “collections [that] were arranged systematically to show industrial processes ... public teaching programs and analytical laboratories [that] facilitated the

²² Museum director, Frederick McCoy, also had agricultural models made for educative purposes – see Museum Victoria, 2000).

²³ From the mid 1860s onward, agricultural shows and field days were the major events via which those living in rural areas could learn about new technologies and techniques. See Darian-Smith and Wills, 1999; Cannon, 1978.

application of technical knowledge to the colonies industries” (Fennessy, 2005: 45) (see Figure 5.2).

This type of applied museum learning reflects the early participatory dimensions of education discussed in previous chapters in this thesis. People, in this instance museum audiences, were engaging in a learning experience, one that gave them the capacity to apply their knowledge to their everyday activities. Yet the Museum’s educative laboratories and activities were gradually (and physically) sidelined. By the 1890s this type of education was overtaken by “the University science courses and specialist technical education institutions” (Fennessy, 2005: 59). This institutional repositioning distanced a particular visitor subset – in contemporary terms, a community of practice – and meant museums were more removed from personal interaction with this user group.

One can interpret the participatory dimensions of these activities as precursors to the way museums currently represent and interpret human engagement with the environment. Retrospectively, indeed, one can muse that these collections are cultural bridges, objects that, with appropriate interpretation, have the capacity to illustrate the multiple layers that are inherent in the relationship between humans and the environment. To do this, however, necessitates understanding how Australian museums have gone on to engage with environmental issues.

5.2.2 Environmental history and interpretation in Australian museums

During the early to mid twentieth century, continued focus on natural history collections and manufacturing innovations meant Australian museums did not conduct detailed research into adverse environmental impacts from a social perspective (Robin, 2002).²⁴ While Robin (2002) has charted the development of national collecting activities in relation to zoology, anatomy, biology and

²⁴ One should acknowledge, however, that the collection and research activities of the Australian Commonwealth Scientific Industry Research Organisation (CSIRO) were hugely influential in relation to natural history during this time. It developed, for example, the Australian Natural Insect Collection in the entomology section. For a detailed review of different natural science collections pre 1970, see Robin (2002).

entomology, the development and interpretation of agricultural collections is less forthcoming.²⁵

Since the 1970s, however, museums have responded to an increased interest in the way people have an impact on, and connection with, the environment, a subject that many consider is as much cultural as it is scientific (Griffiths, 2003; Head, 2000). Environmental history has emerged as an influential discourse via which Australian museums explore issues of land, identity and innovation (Smith, 2003). It forms a distinctive contrast to the taxonomic and scientific approaches that previously characterised much museum work in this subject arena. This shift was addressed in the previous chapter, with particular regard to the National Museum of Australia. However, it remains pertinent to ask how inclusive historical methodologies and environmental history have facilitated participatory practices in Australian museums.

Contemporary environmental historians of 19th century Australia have contributed to a re-reading of landscape use and development. This re-reading has had an impact on the way interpretations of the environment have developed to include the social dimensions of production, development and conservation. Bonyhady (2000: 2), for example, refuted Lines (1991) and Barr & Cary's (1992) view that 19th century colonialists simply saw land as something to be controlled and tamed. Bonyhady (2000) suggested that most early settlers who worked on the land had a deep concern for its health and vitality, and this perspective has influenced the writings of Griffiths (2001) and Frost (2002). Much of this thinking has been influenced by narratives contained in journals, diary excerpts or transcripts from Royal Commissions (Griffiths (2001)). Many of these narratives communicate a sense of intimacy and connection that many of the individuals who worked and lived on the land actually felt. It is this use of narrative and bona fide voices to develop these interpretations that has influenced the Australian museums.

²⁵ Museum Victoria's H.V. McKay/Massey Ferguson collection is an exception to this (Fahey et al., 2003; Lack, 1990). Indeed, the depth of this collection and its link to the Harvester Case is also a primary vehicle via which to discuss the development of industrial relations, a subject that in itself is embedded in the notion of participatory democracy, but which is too broad a topic for discussion here.

Personal connection, as Tilden (1977) suggested, is a key interpretive principle, and many contemporary Australia museums have used this methodological approach to bring their visitors into more immediate contact with their subject. Individual voices and personal stories now feature prominently in exhibitions relating to a range of subjects, and form a vital part of object provenance and significance assessments (Bedford, 2001; Wills, 2004; Wills, S, 2003). This accessible and inclusive approach to interpretation and representation is a significant museological development. Oral testimony and other intangible cultural heritage has the capacity to convey more than just facts, it can provide multi-layered interpretive opportunities and learning experiences, and it has resonance for contemporary environmental museum projects. Stories and personal experiences are used to bring visitors into a more immediate sense of connection with those who work on the land, as well as to the land on which they work. I believe this use of narrative also represents an important participatory shift in representative and interpretive techniques and concur with Griffiths' (2003: 3) passion for the power and potential of storytelling:

It is the most powerful educational tool we possess; it is learning distilled in a common language ... narrative is not just a means, it is a method ... The conventional scientific method separates causes from one another, it isolates each one and tests them individually in turn. Narrative, by contrast, carries multiple causes along together, it enacts connectivity ... stories change the way people act, the way they use available knowledge. The stories we live by determine the future. So, in harnessing the power of narrative, in listening to, rediscovering and generating true stories, we change the world.

The use of narratives in an environmental context also reflects what Griffiths (2001: 1) called the "rapprochement of science and the humanities". As noted previously, museums began to diversify the way they discussed, understood and interpreted landscape and environmental management in 1960s. These changes must be seen in the context of developments in traditional academic disciplines, such as history, science and sociology (Bowman, 2002; Griffiths, 1996, 2001, 2002; 2003; Robin & Griffiths, 2004; Vanclay 1995, 1997, 1999, 2004). They reflect developments in the socio-political arena, including concerns about biodiversity and sustainability, the rise of environmentalism in the 1960s and the development of the conservation movement that influenced museum work (American Association of Museums Environmental Committee, 1971; Davis, 1996; Heim, 2001; Nair, 1996; Nilsson & Rosen, 2001).

Further, they reflect work in the museum and heritage industries that has promoted cultural understandings of place (Archibald, 2000, 2004; Davis, 1996, 1999; Nilsson & Rosen, 2001; Tilden, 1977). Davis (1996) for example, discussed nature conservation in relation to the development of field museums, parks and interpretation centres and the ecomuseum movement. Such expansion is visible in the evolving heritage terminology, such as cultural landscapes and intangible cultural heritage (Australia/ICOMOS, 2000). In this context, it is useful to reiterate Riviere's (1985: 182) definition of an ecomuseum, which clearly illustrated the interpretive and participatory potential of people's interaction with the environment:

It is a mirror in which the local population views itself to discover its own image, in which it seeks an explanation of the territory to which it is attached and of the populations which have preceded it, ... It is a mirror that the local population holds up to its visitors so that it may be better understood and so that its industry, customs and identity may command respect. It is an expression of man and nature. It situates man in his natural environment. It portrays nature in its wilderness, but also as adapted by traditional and industrial society in their own image

Robin & Griffiths (2004) suggested that broad-based environmental history – in bringing environment and people, and science and culture together – acknowledges the integrated approach to land and culture essential to Australian Aboriginal cultural traditions and knowledge. Certainly the Pigott Report of 1975, and the subsequent thematic development of exhibition galleries at the NMA, reflected this shifting focus. Exhibitions developed in response to the Piggott Report's call for a gallery of Aboriginal Australia and a gallery about people's interaction with the Australian environment (Committee of Inquiry of Museum and National Collections, 1975). The environment has featured strongly in the NMA's displays, and has been interpreted in relation to people's connections to place as well as in relation to the natural history. This connection is expressed in first person context, for example: "Our story is in the land ... It is written in those sacred places. My children will look after that place, that's the law (Bill Neidjie quoted on NMA, 2006: website). Museum Victoria, the South Australian Museum and the Australia Museum have all developed exhibitions that focus on Aboriginal history and highlight the centrality of the land to Aboriginal cultural identity.²⁶

²⁶ These exhibitions include Bunjalaka, Museum Victoria, the Aboriginal Cultures Gallery, South Australian Museum and the Indigenous Australians Gallery, Australian Museum.:

Connection is also expressed in a biographical context. The NMA's *Old New Land: Australia's People and the Environment* (formerly *Tangled Destinies*) exhibition and associated website, for example, highlight the story of author Roma Dulhunty's attachment to Lake Eyre in central Australia (see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3: Roma Dulhunty's story is part of the *Tangled Destinies* (*Old New Land*) exhibition (NMA, 2006: website)

Old New Land is a permanent exhibition developed to show “how the past has shaped the Australian continent and how our hopes and fears are written in its features” (NMA, 2005: website). It has also used multimedia to convey stories and place-based information, such as the interactive associated with the Murray-Darling Basin (see Figure 5.4).

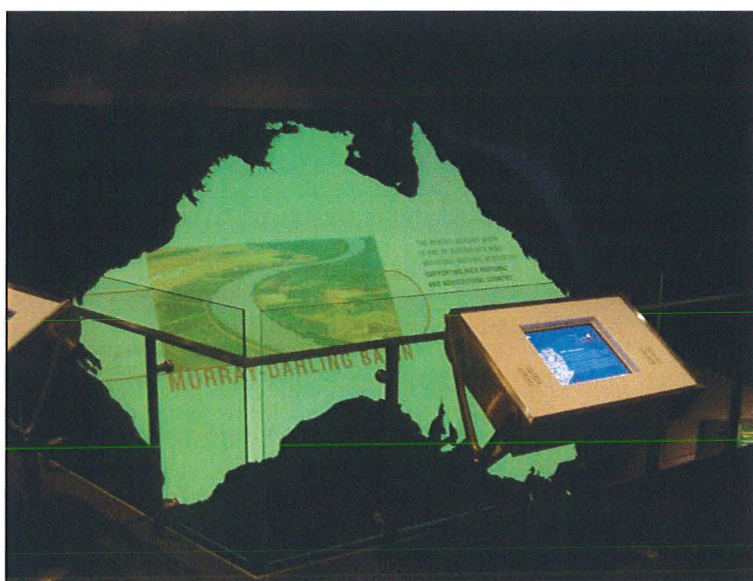


Figure 5.4: Murray-Darling Basin highlighted in one of the multimedia interactives in *Tangled Destinies* (*Old New Land*), NMA (Image courtesy Darren Peacock).

Environmental history has been the basis for a range of projects in the larger state museums over the last decade (see Appendix G, examples 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17, 18). Another example is the Western Australian Museum's exhibition *Western Australia: Land and People* which examined the interconnected nature of people and the environment in a bid to urge visitors to reflect on the way land and living species are affected by humans, landscape change and development. Further, it acknowledges the intimate connection Indigenous people in Western Australia have with the landscape and, as such, curators sought advice from relevant Indigenous groups regarding certain components of the exhibition development (Trinca, 0 2003. PhD Interview #1).

From an institutional perspective, a number of contemporary Australian museum workers – for example, Liza Dale-Hallett from Museum Victoria and Dr Mike Smith from the NMA – have explored alternative and human dimensions of this topic. Their ability to undertake this type of work is a testimony to the influence that new historiographies and the New Museology have had in an Australian context. What one needs to consider, however, is how to transfer the enthusiasm of select individuals to institutional policy. This has, in part, been started by the Museums Australia (2001) policy for sustainability. However, there is still much work to be done in terms of undertaking this research and activity in a participatory capacity.

From a participatory perspective, this shift in representation and interpretation has opened up greater opportunities via which people can engage and interact with this subject. Yet, as an advocate of the benefits of participatory practices, I argue too, that this shift could be made even more radical in terms of developing effective learning experiences at the project development stage. In-house exhibitions in bigger regional and state museums have been developed, largely, by museum staff. It is mainly outreach projects and travelling exhibitions (as discussed below) that allow the public into the exhibition development process in a participatory context.²⁷ Thus although the improved interpretive and interactive approaches provide visitors with greater personal learning experiences, they are

²⁷ Excluding those who participate in front end evaluation focus groups.

still one step away from being participants in the process, and thus one step removed from the learning potential that being involved in the process of project development offers.²⁸

Many smaller museums and community museums have also addressed NRM issues through their collections and displays, although frequently their NRM-related displays relate to agricultural machinery (NSW Heritage Office, 2001). In a participatory context, the eco-museum model stands out because it embeds the community in cultural dimensions of landscape, and recognises the central role intangible and tangible cultural heritage – see, for example, the Kodja Place in Appendix G example 12. Some museums and historical societies have used a thematic approach to discuss the cultural dimensions of environmental issues. Another Western Australian community museum, the Irwin District Museum in Dongara, developed an exhibition and associated website called *Run Rabbit Run* to address the impacts of rabbits on the Western Australian environment and society (Australian Museums and Galleries Online, 2002: website). Project developers have used oral history, video interviews and diary excerpts to communicate the way people dealt with the rabbit problem. They have framed this in relation to the scientific, environment and socio-cultural perspective of this problem (See Figure 5.5).

²⁸ Despite the preceding advocacy for interpreting and representing issues in environmental history, it is also important to remember that some cultural practices integrate, indeed, depend upon, the concept of change. In an international context, for example, Setton (2005) discussed this notion of landscape evolution and adaptation as an inherent part of cultural tradition in relation to Norway. This idea of embracing change is also discussed in the NARA Document on Authenticity (World Heritage Committee, 1994; Agency for Cultural Affairs (Government of Japan) and the Nara Prefecture (1994), and is implicit in the concept of significance as outlined by the Heritage Collections Council (2001).

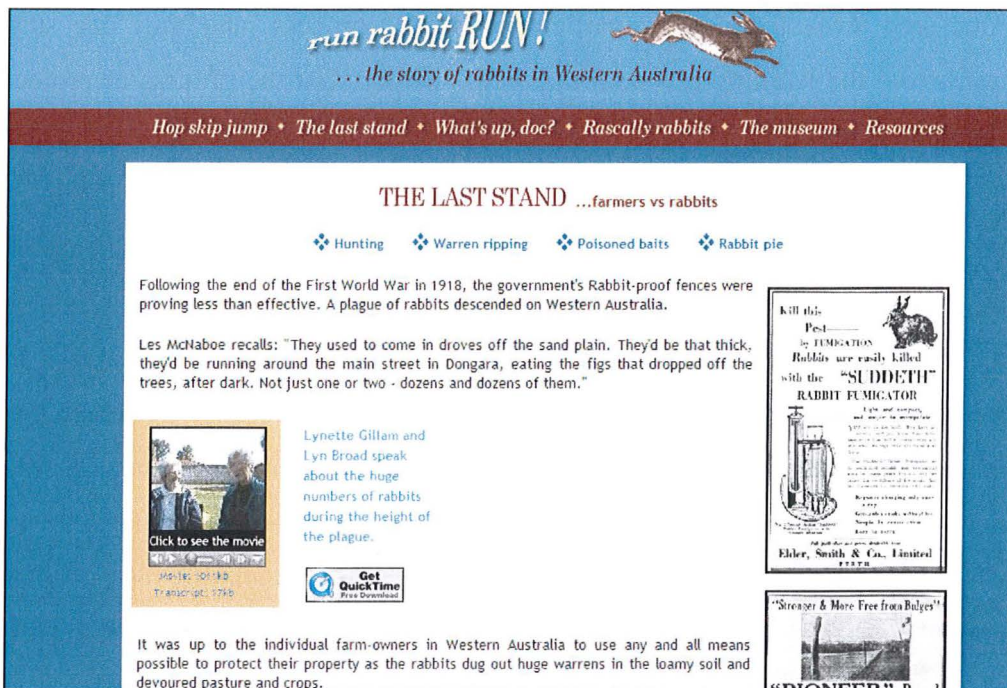


Figure 5.5: *Run Rabbit Run* online exhibition, Irwin District Museum, Western Australia (AMOL, 2002: website).

Bringing people back into contact with landscapes, food or flora and fauna (and in a variety of capacities) at once recognises and legitimises their place in the deterioration, management and preservation of environments, species and resources. It also suggests that active participation in caring for landscape, and the cultural practices and traditions embedded in those landscapes, may help address issues of environmental concern. Museums must recognise, however, that including narratives such as community and personal stories is not a participatory approach per se, but the beginnings of inclusive interpretation. Participatory projects demand a level of active engagement in the project development; the two projects in Section 5.2 illustrate the benefits of this approach.

5.2.3 *Relevant principles from other disciplines*

Recognition of human agency in environmental issues and management at an interdisciplinary level has been central to much of this work. In Australia this has been essential to understanding Aboriginal connections and relationship to land (Robin & Griffiths, 2004; Rose & Australian Heritage Commission, 1996). Cultural geographer Lesley Head echoed the opinions of NRM extension workers (such as Vanclay, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2004) by stating that scientists recognised a

need to integrate human dimensions but were not as yet clear as to how to do this.

Head et al. (2004: 5) stressed:

Although it may seem counterintuitive that the foremost influences on the success of environmental policy could be social, conservation interventions are the product of human decision-making processes and require changes in human behaviour to succeed.

Prior to Head et al.'s (2004) reflections, Griffiths (2003: 7) had also argued that the humanities research methodologies could greatly contribute to advancing environmental understandings:

Scientists often argue for the need to overcome deficits of knowledge, but rarely ask why we do not act upon what we already know. Most of the constraints working against environmental change are cultural: we have to know ourselves as well as the country.

These discussions were preceded by similar arguments in the disciplines of NRM extension and rural sociology. Vanclay (1992, 1997: 9), for example, has been a staunch advocate of the “social basis of environmental management in agriculture”. His work has challenged agricultural science and NRM practitioners to recognise that:

Farm management practices are physical manifestations of cultural expression which are loaded with social meanings and significance, they are not solely technical. Farmers want practical advice, but that advice needs to be based on a social understanding. A key aspect of that social understanding is that diversity in agriculture should be conceived of in social, rather than merely in physical or structural terms (Vanclay, 2004: 222).

To integrate these ideas into a tangible framework for NRM extension officers and workers, Vanclay (2004: 213-221) devised 27 social principles for consideration in relation to agricultural extension. It is useful to consider these in relation to the development of NRM-related museum projects as they highlight the importance of inclusion, diversity, accessibility and education, and reject the stereotype of farmers as a homogenous group. They establish farming as a socio-cultural practice, one that recognises the value of continuity and connection with the land. They reject top-down extension practices as inappropriate and recognise that science and technology are not the only methods by which to enact change. Further they suggest attempts to change to farming methods need to value farmers as well as incorporate an appreciation of farmers' world view (Vanclay, 2004).

Implicit in these principles is the notion that farming constitutes a human dimension of agricultural and environmental management, and that this human dimension incorporates socio-cultural practices. The principles reflect an

awareness of participatory discourse and the ethical dimensions of engagement that Aslin (2004) highlighted. They recognise that the need for inclusion, diversity, trust, value, self worth and education are social needs – needs that position people very much as central to the process of environmental management. Further, one can draw parallels between these principles and Dana's (Peniston, 1999) 16 fundamental notes for improving the use and relevance of museums (discussed in Chapter 2). Both authors are mindful of the need for institutional change. Further, both have addressed the issue of engagement and participation in a manner that recognises they are crucial to inclusive project development, social progress and the refinement of professional practices.

Another NRM specialist, Curtis (2004), has identified arts initiatives as an interesting methodological diversion for NRM extension practitioners. By substituting traditional extension activities with community cultural development activities, Curtis's (2004) argument for participation in the arts is similar to that of McCarthy & Jinnet (2001) in that it assesses the value of performing arts developed on a community arts model, and analyses, to a degree, audience participation. Yet in his analysis of three projects based in NSW, Curtis (2004: 4-5) also highlighted the benefits of communities participating in the development of the projects:

A richness of ideas emerged from numerous brainstorming breakfasts that tapped into the creative talents of many people. The visual and performing arts were incorporated into meetings to facilitate this. New networks of understanding were formed as people who might not normally work together such as artists, farmers and scientists collaborated on the event.

The “rapprochement”, therefore, has been an enabling phenomenon, not just from an academic perspective, but also for a variety of professions as well as the public, and has influenced the development of a number of significant Australian museum projects.

5.3 Participatory NRM projects in Australian museums: two minor case studies

The NMA's *A Changing People, A Changing Land* (CPCL) and Museum Victoria's *Future Harvest* (FH) are two NRM-related museum projects that have integrated participatory processes and practices. Both of these projects addressed the theme of sustainable agriculture and environmental management. Each project is considered from the institutional perspective, exploring, in particular, the participatory approach deemed appropriate and the context and capacity in which the project's methodology was developed.²⁹ The projects are described in relation to geographic location, the surrounding environment and in relation to the specific communities. The discussion of *Future Harvest* draws on personal experience and secondary research. My role as a field curator on this project potentially introduces some bias into the discussion. However, it is an appropriate project to include because of the subject matter and the applied participatory fieldwork. See Table 5A for an overview of the key points relating to each project.

5.3.1 Case study 1: *A Changing People, A Changing Land*

A Changing People, A Changing Land (CPCL) was one of the first major NMA initiatives that came to fruition. It was adapted from a proposal for the main galleries addressing environmental issues the Murray-Darling Basin and was reconfigured into a travelling exhibition with associated outreach dimensions between 1990 and 1995 when construction delays meant that the NMA building would not be ready for some time (and ultimately not till 2001).³⁰

In its capacity as a travelling exhibition, CPCL was a collaboration between the NMA and the MDBC, and from the start it had an ambitious agenda. Its objective was to:

ask the question how and why did the present social and physical environment of the Murray-Darling Basin come into being? ... explore the links between the human environment history of the MDB [and as] a vital part in the exhibition planning ... involve each local community in developing a component of the exhibition about their region (Baker & Lane, 1993: v).

²⁹ It would have been useful to contact previous participants in each project to discuss their engagement in more detail. Due to time and word limitations, however, this was beyond the scope of this research.

³⁰ These plans were outlined in the previous chapter in relation to delays in fully developing the NMA.

NMA curators developed a range of key storylines to address the issue of environmental change in the Murray-Darling Basin area. These included: “People on the move ... Centres of population ... Making a Living in the MDB - ... Tourism ... Changing the Landscape in the MDB ... [and] Sense of community” (Baker and Lane, 1993: vi). One of these themes - centres of population - focused on major regional towns within the Murray-Darling Basin. These themes were used to identify exhibition venues and consequently had an impact on the development of the regionally specific components included in the exhibition (see Figure 5.6).

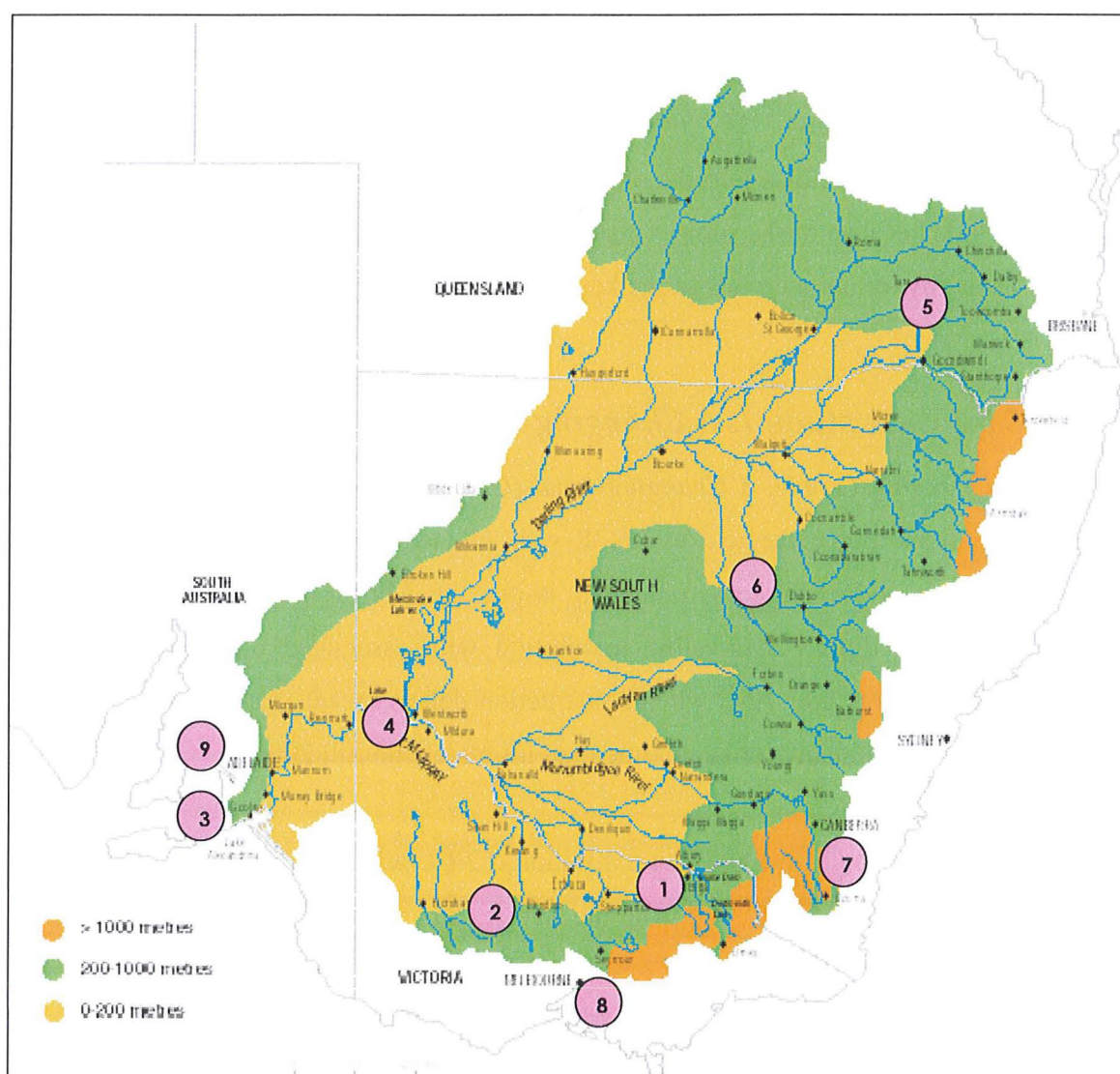


Figure 5.6: CPCL toured to seven communities in the Murray-Darling Basin: 1. Albury Wodonga, Vic; 2. Bendigo, Vic; 3. Goolwa, SA; 4. Mildura, Vic; 5. Toowoomba, Qld; 6. Dubbo, NSW; 7. Canberra, ACT; 8. Melbourne, Vic; 9. Adelaide, SA. [Map courtesy MDBC].

NMA curators visited regions throughout the Basin to identify potential display material. Although their approach and thematic research varied in each place, they liaised with a variety of groups, including local libraries, Indigenous community organisations, individual farmers and personal contacts, as well as staff and volunteers from local museums and historical societies (Shephard, 2004. *Pers. Comm.*). They worked, for example, with the Pioneer Women's Hut in Tumbarumba between Albury and Canberra, and in Mildura (Vic.) they met with the Dried Fruits Association, one of the area's most influential industries (Lane, 2004. *Pers. Comm.*).

Involving people from the Murray-Darling Basin

Venues were chosen in relation to regional demographics, and centres of population (as noted above). The NMA advertised for locally-based facilitators to develop the regional components.³¹ These facilitators visited the NMA in Canberra to discuss ideas and the exhibition storyline with project developers, and then returned to discuss how to proceed with and develop their contribution in conjunction with interested members of the communities – particularly local museums and landcare groups. Facilitators identified the main themes and objects and wrote the text for the exhibition panels. The NMA reviewed this text, and built the exhibition modules for each regional display. These were ultimately given to the host region at the end of the exhibition and many ended up in regional museums, such as the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo (Shephard, 2004. *Pers. Comm.*). Additional benefits to each region occurred during the exhibition installation when the NMA hired local labourers. NMA curator, Denis Shephard, who travelled with the exhibition during its tour, recalled that the community components and complementary displays developed in Mildura (Vic) were substantial, and that the facilitator arranged for the local exhibition to go on a mini tour of the region.

Thus, the NMA approached the development of *CPCL* with an inclusive mindset from the beginning, although one could argue that a truly participatory approach would have consulted with each of the communities prior to selecting them for inclusion in the exhibition. Nonetheless, the guiding principles that underpinned

³¹ Although the exhibition visited Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide, only the regional centres developed local exhibitions.

the exhibition development illustrate the NMA's commitment to collaborative and inclusive practices. These principles were articulated in a preliminary exhibition brief and included:

- Encouraging a sense of shared responsibility ...
- Adopting a 'what are the answers?' approach ...
- Power and decision making ...
- Encouraging a sense of place ...
- Adopting a 'Reading the landscape' approach ...
- Cooperation with local museums ...
- Examining patterns of change ...
- Integrating Aboriginal Issues (Baker and Lane, 1993: 3).

Read from a participatory perspective, this approach fits easily into the participatory ideals discussed throughout this thesis. This is particularly the case when one reflects on the principles outlined by Aslin & Brown (2004: 17) – “courage, inclusiveness, commitment, respect and honesty, flexibility and mutual obligation”. They are evidence that the exhibition was designed to have an impact beyond the exhibition itself, and that the capacity building that was inherent in its development had transformative potential for those involved. As such, these principles and the approach were of interest to a range of different communities. A press release by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (1994: website), for example, noted:

What is unique about the exhibition is how it was compiled. The museum worked with, indigenous and wider communities, right around the Basin, enabling them to tell their stories about different people, land use, changes that have occurred over time, and what is being done now to solve environmental problems ... The exhibition, which includes many hands-on displays, examines Aboriginal land use over 40,000 years and the introduction of new cultural groups which have changed the landscape dramatically. Groups such as Greening Australia, Aboriginal Land Councils, Bushfire Brigades and Country Women's Associations were involved.

The inclusion of Indigenous communities in the exhibition proposal was a key objective of CPCL. In the context of migration and settlement Baker & Lane (1993: 12) argued there was “a need to counter the myth that traditional Aboriginal people were aimless nomadic wanderers”. They proposed a variety of interpretive methods to address this issue, including using stories from those moved onto Aboriginal missions and the song of well-known Aboriginal singer, Archie Roach, *Take the Children Away*.

A number of controversial environmental issues were addressed, including the use of fire, mining, rabbiting, the role of National Parks and government-related

scientific research. In addition, by addressing the issue of community, the project developers and partner institution (MDBC) hoped to “develop a wider understanding of the historical factors that have brought communities together and those that have divided communities” (Baker & Lane, 1993: 20). Isolation, disaster and sport were used to communicate the way communities developed a sense of place and identity.

To extend the CPCL exhibition, the NMA, developed the ‘Ann Fibian’ CD ROM which:

explores the relationship between the history of the Murray-Darling Basin and current environmental problems, and demonstrates some of the ways in which these problems can be solved. Six different locations in the Murray-Darling Basin are visited and each visit involves an exploration of its history, an investigation of a particular environmental problem and a problem solving simulation/modelling exercise. Problems encountered include soil erosion, salinity, blue-green algae, flooding, loss of native fish and deforestation (Uniserve Science, 2004: website).

It included interpretive interactive computer games based on the exhibition context, from recycling exhibition materials (Lane, R, 2006. *Pers. Comm.*).

5.3.2 Case Study 2: Future Harvest

In 1997, Museum Victoria hired two field curators and a manager to work on a new exhibition called *Future Harvest: A journey towards a sustainable future (FH)*. This exhibition aimed to improve public understanding that agricultural sustainability involves innovative methods of farming, a balance between environment, producers and consumers, and that a healthy farming future is dependent upon decisions made today.³² Designed to be a travelling exhibition, *FH* was conceived along similar lines to *CPCL*, although it was always intended to be a travelling exhibition. Like *CPCL*, a core exhibition component travelled to each of the five regional venues (see Figure 5.7). Its major point of difference was the development of region-specific case study farms which showcased tangible sustainable farming practices and the families who had developed them.

³² Paraphrased notes from Wills, 1997. Future Harvest exhibition work book 1, July.

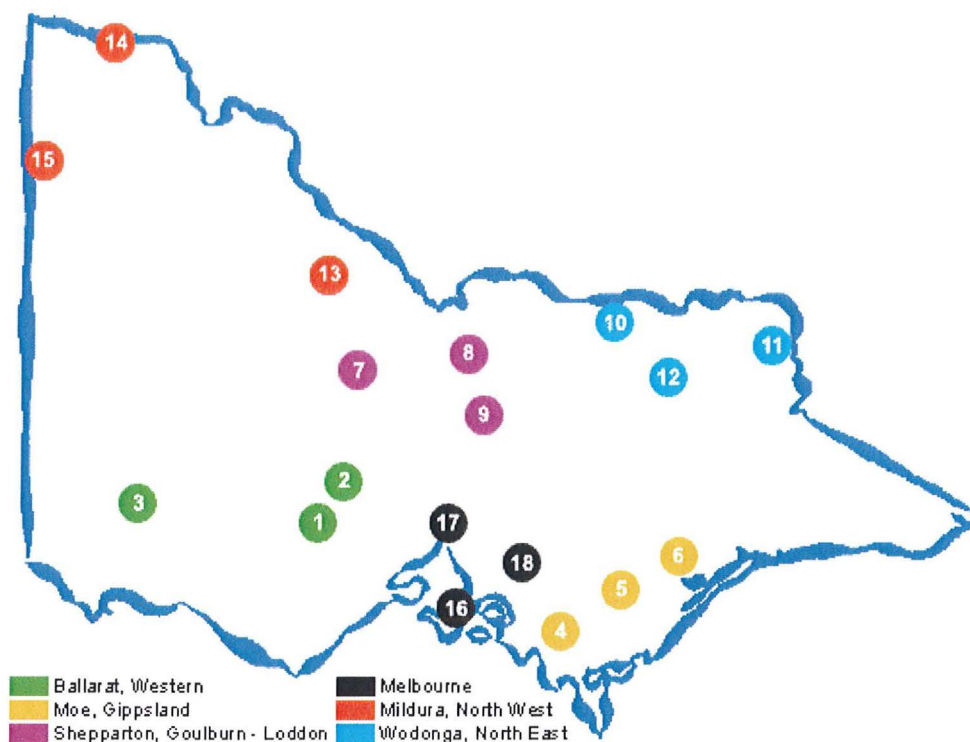


Figure 5.7: Map of Victoria marking the location of 18 case study farms in *Future Harvest*. The exhibition was on display in Moe (near 5), Ballarat (1), Shepparton (9), Mildura (14), Wodonga, (near 20) and Melbourne (17). [Map courtesy Museum Victoria, 2000: website]

Although the concept for *FH* originated with Liza Dale-Hallett, then Curator of Primary Production at Scienceworks, the project came to fruition after a museum-wide restructure in 1996-1997 and was subsequently situated in the Technology section. This institutional restructure occurred as part of the planning for the new Museum Victoria venues at the Exhibition Gardens in Carlton and the Immigration Museum in Flinders Street. It was significant because its goal was to focus museum staff on the redevelopment of the museum.

Future Harvest emerged as one of the few tangible museum projects in the midst of this institutional change and redevelopment. It was, however, developed using external funding and was, in many ways, isolated from the main activity of the museum at the time. Researched and compiled by contract curators, *FH* addressed a topic that was one step removed from the themes being developed for the main Museum Victoria venue and was destined for regional venues. This institutional distraction was at once a blessing and a curse. Although *FH* did not receive the usual managerial attention given to such an innovative project, it did receive the full support and attention of the in-house design team, museum photographers and preparatory staff as it was the only project with concrete design briefs.

Selecting the case study participants

Prior to 1997, Dale-Hallett developed a reference group which included NRM practitioners and extension workers from regional offices in the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment. This reference group helped compile a list of potential case study farms throughout regional Victoria. They also acted in an advisory capacity to the two field curators who liaised with each potential farmer, ascertained their suitability, availability and enthusiasm for a museum project, ensured a variety of farming styles were represented, and established a preferred list of candidates. Assistance from people from within the NRM industry was crucial to the successful recruitment of case study farms. Most members of the reference group spoke to the individual farmers prior to the field curators and thus established the credibility and legitimacy of the project. Those farmers who agreed to participate conveyed a passion for sustainable land use, healthy communities and native species, and hoped their participation would highlight their practices and inspire others to follow to their lead. Each case study farm was compensated for their involvement and, although this was only a small amount, tangible recognition that their time was valuable helped to build a sense of good will.³³ Thus a range of stakeholders, including the participants themselves, were involved in the selection process.

Conducting the fieldwork

The *FH* field curators visited 18 different farms/properties throughout regional Victoria. Prior to each visit, the field curators undertook research into the region, industry and relevant issues for each farm. They also provided museum staff photographers with a photographic brief, and, where appropriate, provided a contract film crew with a brief and overview of the relevant farming issues.³⁴ A typical site visit comprised two days. It included a walking tour of the farm, field curators 'shadowing' the farmers as they went about their daily business, a recorded interview with the farmer and photographic documentation (usually on day two). Both field curators acknowledged:

³³ Each case study received a cheque for \$750 for their involvement.

³⁴ Eight documentary style videos were made as part of the project and were used in the exhibition and compiled into an education video by Video Education Australasia.

the most important aspect of the fieldwork was gaining the interest and trust of the case study participants. This was done [in] an unobtrusive manner, sensitive handling of their subject, acknowledging case study participants as experts in their field and giving them a chance to tell their story in their own words (Wills and Jones, 1998: 5).

One could argue that the planning and implementation of these fieldtrips was undertaken in a participatory capacity. They were undertaken in the spirit of active learning and exchange, recognised and accommodated the different needs and skills of a variety of professions, and included, where possible, a range of people on the farm to provide multiple perspectives and ideas. The fieldtrips were crucial because they provided the opportunity to meet the farmers in a face-to-face capacity. Taking the time to get involved and learn and share stories was a way of getting to know the people that were the subject of the exhibition. South Gippsland dairy farmer Brian Enbom, for example, changed his perception of the project when museum staff encouraged his son to join in the activities during the visit. Although Evan was initially very shy, he gradually became more talkative and interested as the visit progressed and eventually suggested locations for photographs, guided us around 'his' farm and joined the search for the elusive Giant Gippsland Earthworm³⁵ (see Figure 5.8). Brian Enbom later remarked that he had never seen him so confident with strangers and that he was amazed and delighted at this transformation.



Figure 5.8: Jo Wills, Brian and Evan Enbom search for the Giant Gippsland Earthworm on their dairy farm (Photograph: John Broomfield, Museum Victoria, 1997).

³⁵ The Giant Gippsland Earthworm (*Megascolides australis*) is native to Australia and grows up to one metre long. It is found in a small area of South Gippsland (Victoria) but is threatened by land clearing and cultivation. For more information see Van Praagh (1992) and the website for the Department of Sustainability and Environment (2006).

The exhibition development process was also conducted in an inclusive manner. Where possible, photographers and preparatory staff participated in fieldtrips and planning. This approach was both an incentive and a form of active learning (in this case, professional development). Further, it meant that those involved were engaged, enthusiastic and accommodating, and this goodwill contributed to bringing a project on a tight timeframe to fruition. The images, preparatory objects and exhibition design incorporated a sense of the people behind the stories. Case study participants, in turn, reviewed the interpretative approach and text for their stories prior to design finalisation to ensure they were happy with their representation and the issues discussed.

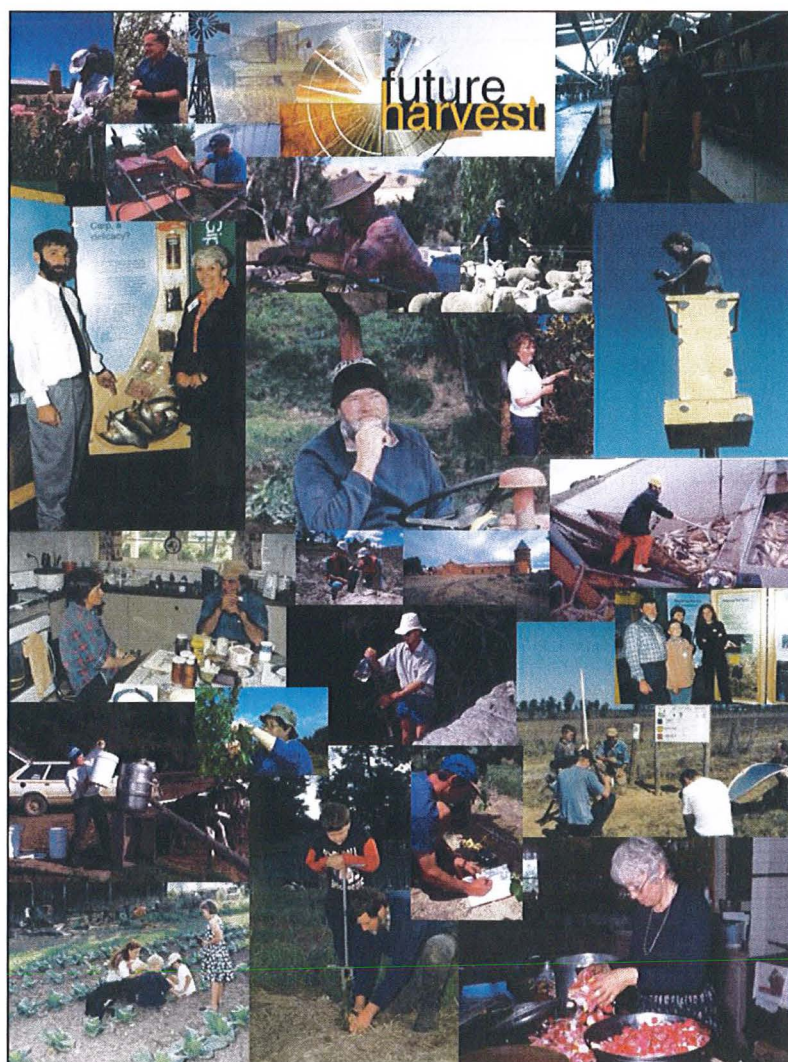


Figure 5.9: FH collage: participants, their families, film crews, field curators and photographers. [Images courtesy Museum Victoria, taken by MV photography staff during fieldtrips. Collage compiled by Jo Wills, 2006³⁶].

³⁶ Collage based on images from regional case studies from Shepparton, Loddon Plains, North East Victoria, South Gippsland and Lake Wellington curated by Jo Wills. Rebecca Jones curated nine other case studies from Western Victoria, North West Victoria and Central Gippsland.

Involving people from regional Victoria

The *FH* manager, Darren Peacock, and field curators worked with locally-based communities and councils to generate support and funding for the exhibition's regional tour. Each region had a *FH* committee which consisted of representatives from local NRM agencies, local councils and landcare groups. Although successful, the exhibition report noted that more lead time was needed, that roles of the museum and the local committee needed to be clearer and that there was confusion about venue costs, staffing and publicity (Wills & Jones, 1998). The field curators took it in turn to travel with the exhibition to each regional venue. This gave them the advantage of immediate feedback and interaction with the public, including casual visitors and school groups, and a sense of how people engaged with and responded to the exhibition.

Despite the success of the fieldtrips and the exhibition methodology, communicating what was learnt via the medium of an exhibition was tricky. Interactives, videos, objects, images, interactive visual panoramas, oral histories and a detailed education kit were developed to convey the messages of the exhibition. Not all of this was well received by the public. One visitor, for example, reflected: "It's just like the trams in Melbourne now without conductors – all interaction with machines" (Comment from Wodonga visitor book cited in Wills & Jones, 1998: 42). Teacher-related criticisms in the visitor's book related to the 'city' language while some teachers felt that material was too difficult for students. Some visitors wanted more information, and some were concerned that the exhibition was preaching to the converted (Wills & Jones, 1998).

There was also considerable positive feedback and excitement from visitors to the exhibition. This was due in part to the fact that people didn't have to travel to Melbourne to see such a display, but also because they were pleased the topic was being addressed in a personal and accessible manner, and excited by the opportunity to learn:

This display is going to improve the image of farming and farmers. People often think of farmers as rather slow and boring but the exhibition illustrates the skills and knowledge needed to run a farm sustainably. The key message I'll be taking to the kids in my class is that these farmers are talented, creative and dynamic people (Comment from Wodonga visitor book cited in Wills & Jones, 1998: 45).

My own reflections, having been involved in this project, are that the most productive learning was experiential, that meeting participants and actually visiting the farm was vital. Thus the most formative learning experiences were really only available to museum staff. The interaction with case study families was pivotal to the exhibition. The exhibition approach, which again reflects Aslin & Brown's (2004: 17) engagement principles of "courage, inclusiveness, commitment, respect and honesty, flexibility and mutual obligation", meant the relationship between the curators and participants was particularly strong and good humoured. This enthusiasm transferred to the interpretive process itself. The *FH* project manager hired a cartoonist, Chris Rule, to produce cartoons for each case study (see Figure 5.10). These captured the message and learning style inherent in the exhibition, as well as the approach used to engage participants. Further, the relationship was based on an exchange model – curators had ready access to expert opinions and a sounding board while participants learnt how to develop communication strategies about their innovation.



Figure 5.10: Two of cartoonist Chris Rule's cartoons for *Future Harvest* case studies relating to salinity and water testing (Images courtesy Museum Victoria, 2001: website).

Future Harvest was successful in relation to its stated aims and its identity as a travelling exhibition, however, I felt the participatory dimensions of this project could have been extended by developing more associated public programs, getting more people involved in generating the case studies. Further, the collaborative approach could have been the basis for generating a range of ongoing and different participatory projects but did not get taken up at the institutional level. This is understandable, given the museum was undergoing a period of change, however, this successful model had the potential to promote the benefits of participatory projects for museums. Although an evaluation report was produced

after the exhibition, there was no understanding of how the farmers felt about the project and processes. Thus, in this sense, an opportunity to illustrate the benefits of participatory approaches was missed, and while curator Dale-Hallett (2005, 2006) has continued her interest in collaborative NRM and sustainability-related projects, this approach remains peripheral to museum activities.³⁷

³⁷ Dale-Hallett has been involved in a range of sustainability-related projects at Museum Victoria. These include the award winning *WaterSmart Home* interactive currently on display at Museum Victoria (Museum Victoria, 2004: website), and the *Women on Farms Gathering Project* that is highlighted in Appendix G, example 3.

5.4 Participatory analysis: a critical discussion

A Changing People, A Changing Land and *Future Harvest* are good examples via which to examine Australian museums' approach to participatory practices. That both projects take NRM as their subject is useful for the purposes of this thesis, and clearly relevant when reflecting on how museums can contribute to NRM issues. This is also interesting in the context of the NRM extension literature which clearly articulates participatory processes as an important dimension of successful extension practice (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Curtis, 2004; Moore, 2000; Rogers, 2002; Ross et al., 2002; Pretty, 1995; Pretty & Ward, 2001; Vanclay, 2004).

It is useful to reflect, however, on whether it is the subject matter, the project type, and/or engagement techniques that have guided the participatory dimensions of these projects. In this context, it is important to remember these projects were developed by larger Australian museums. While the NMA and Museum Victoria can be considered leaders in Australia in undertaking these types of social NRM projects, is it their size (and accompanying staff and budget) and status as state/national institutions that enabled them to tackle these types of projects in this way? It is also constructive to consider how the New Museology has contributed to this type of inclusive and collaborative approach, and, indeed, whether or not there is sufficient room in which to further develop and apply participatory principles and practices. I believe there is, and that the interpretation of this subject area requires this level of engagement. However, further development would require a commitment to integrating participatory dimensions to the socio-cultural and environmental projects at an institutional level rather than just as the particular interest or passion of individual curators.³⁸

A brief comparison between the two projects highlights their similarities and points of difference (see Table 5A):

³⁸ This has been partially addressed by the Museums Australia policy: *Museums and Sustainability: Guidelines for Policy and Practice in Museums and Galleries* (2001). If a museum-specific engagement policy or set of principles were initiated, however, this integrated approach could help facilitate exciting engagement and learning opportunities.

Dimension	<i>A Changing People, A Changing Land</i>	<i>Future Harvest</i>
Key Dates:	1990-1995	1996-1998
Institution:	Large - National Museum of Australia	Large - Museum Victoria
Major project partners:	Murray-Darling Basin Commission	N/A
Minor project partners:	Local councils, regional museums, landcare groups	Victorian Department of Natural Resources & Environment; Environmental Protection Authority; Landcare Australia; local councils
Geographic location:	Interstate - Murray-Darling Basin	Intra-state - Regional Victoria
Theme:	Human & environmental histories of the Murray-Darling Basin	Sustainable agriculture
Type of project:	Outreach	Outreach
Format:	Travelling exhibition A core component + locally developed exhibition for each region	Travelling exhibition A core component + 3 region-specific case studies based on major farming industries in the area Melbourne shows exhibited all case study modules & 3 case studies from the metropolitan Melbourne region
Venues:	1994: Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Goolwa, Mildura, Toowoomba, Canberra 1995: Dubbo, Melbourne, Adelaide	1998: Moe, Ballarat, Shepparton, Mildura, Wodonga, Melbourne (Royal Melbourne Show & Scienceworks Museum)
Interpretive approach:	Environmental history, objects, photographs, illustrations, diary excerpts, maps	Environmental history, personal stories and examples, objects, photographs, diary excerpts, cartoons, oral histories, videos, objects, preparatory material
Key participatory aspects/ communities:	NMA hired local coordinators venue regions to develop regional exhibition components. NMA paid for this and gave each exhibition to local region Other locally developed displays were mounted by relevant region-specific interest groups	NRM industry reference group to help identify case studies Case study farmers paid to contribute, consulted over interpretive approach Regional FH groups formed & organised local exhibitions and public programs to coincide with visit Variety of Museum Victoria staff very engaged in exhibition, not just curators
Associated activities	Planned list of events to coincide with exhibition – before, during & after it appeared in regional venues – including regional tours	Alternative farming seminars, regional dinners using local produce, industry tours
Education programs	Education kit & Ann Fibian CD Rom	Education kit, education video, exhibition website - part of Museum Victoria's ed-online

**Table 5A: *A Changing People, A Changing Land* and *Future Harvest*:
a comparison of project and participatory dimensions**

When considering the issues of access, diversity, inclusion and learning, both exhibitions appear in a favourable light. Both exhibitions travelled to regional areas which meant many more people from communities of interest, place and practice were able to attend. Access was also promoted via the development of the *FH* website (Museums Victoria, 1998). According to Sumption's (2000) typology for websites (electronic brochures, information, access to collection databases and interpretation), the website was more than a publicity vehicle, it provided a detailed information and access to education material (and this has been enhanced since the exhibition was developed). The issue of diversity was addressed in relation to different commodities, different migrant communities living and

working in the regions, and in relation to gender. By adopting a participatory approach to the case study and regional exhibitions, each project integrated inclusive practices and principles. Learning and education were integral components of both exhibitions and were created during the exhibition development.

What is also apparent is that both of these projects were developed in an outreach context. *CPCL* was more of an object-based outreach program while the activity and information aspects of *FH* were more prevalent. Despite their relative status as national and state museums, work by curators in regional areas was usually construed as a form of research-based fieldwork as opposed to program development. This changed the dynamic between institution and community. In many ways it shifted the idea of the museum as expert to museum as collaborator. This meant each museum was exposed to a different type of community interaction, one that forced them to cede a degree of control, similar to that which Hirzy (2002) and Igoe (2002) discussed in relation to museums and community engagement.

For these exhibitions to succeed, regional partnerships were crucial. Curators from both exhibitions developed links with relevant councils and individuals in recognition of the importance of building local links. One can speculate that this need for community connections was a driver behind the choice of participatory methodology. Community involvement also lent the exhibition a sense of legitimacy and relevance. Each institution was reliant upon the local steering committees to help promote the display to its disparate communities, and upon the local community to attend and support the exhibition. By focussing on the issue of sustainability and agriculture, they attracted interested members of farming communities and school groups, as well as other residents for whom regional touring exhibitions were an event. Interestingly, however, farmers were not seen as project partners, they were major project participants. This distinction reflects institutional reluctance to formally recognise participant communities.

There were other factors driving each institution to use a collaborative approach. In a *CPCL*, for example, the sheer scale of the Murray-Darling Basin meant that

hiring local facilitators to coordinate local exhibitions not only made sense from a collaborative perspective, but from a financial one as well. For *FH*, this issue was not so pressing – most farms were with an accessible two to five hour drive from Melbourne – however local committees held *FH* planning meetings that museum staff could not always attend.

The major difference between the two projects was their interaction with communities in developing the exhibition. While the NMA hired local facilitators to curate local components, Museum Victoria hired two field curators to compile the regional case studies. Clearly this comparison favours the NMA, but one must remember that the exhibition themes were pre-developed and the community was responding to, rather than initiating, the work. Further, although the NMA hired staff to oversee the regional components of the exhibition, Museum Victoria paid case study participants, involved them in the project development, and integrated a personal interpretive approach to a subject that is often portrayed in a scientific manner.

When considered against Marginson's (1993) model for access and participation, the two projects have applied varying degrees of participatory practices at different stages of their delivery (see Table 5B). This comparison shows the limitations of the model because it grades the participatory process without acknowledging that different aspect of projects can be more participatory than others. This failure to see the 'grey' areas of participation in relation to project development makes the model difficult to use in a post project evaluative capacity, but could be considered useful as a pre project planning tool.

Marginson's (1993) model	Exhibition development	<i>A Changing People, A Changing Land</i>	<i>Future Harvest</i>
Public relations	Promotional purposes only	N/A	N/A
Information dissemination	Community networks tapped for exhibitions promotion, education programs, targeted to groups in community	Initial curatorial contact with community networks	Regional venues each had FH steering committees
Information collection	Community access to develop content only according to curatorial precepts	Local facilitators worked up regional exhibition in relation to NMA themes	Liaison with NRM workers & secondary research
Interaction/discussion	Seminars, group interviews, research and collections from within community and implemented by expert	Research by NMA curators	Research by Museum Victoria field curators Public programs relating to agricultural innovation & extension run by local NRM staff
Share in decision making	Exhibition devised and developed by key people, Wider group as helpers	Use of regional museum and landcare networks	NRM reference group guided selection of major principles for exhibition FH steering committees
Partnership	Exhibitions are joint undertakings and outcomes are mutually shared	Collaborative arrangement with MDBC	Collaborative partnerships with local farmers
Delegated control	Exhibition programs devised and implemented by community. Higher authority has veto/censorship	NMA edited & reviewed regional exhibition components	Regional committees organises public programs & local exhibits.
Community control	Exhibition devised, designed and implemented by community without external control	Regional groups developed their own displays to complement the exhibition	Regional groups developed their own displays to complement the exhibition

Table 5B *Changing People, A Changing Land* and *Future Harvest* in relation to Marginson's (1993) model for access and participation for exhibition development.

5.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has endeavoured to illustrate the development and highlight the benefits of interdisciplinary and participatory approaches to representing and interpreting the social dimensions of NRM in Australian museums. It has made a distinction between the use of natural history collections to communicate issues of environmental concern and the way people's experience and personal stories can promote a sense of agency and connection with the issues involved, and in this sense reflects the precepts inherent in the New Museology.

Further, the chapter has presented two tangible case studies developed by Australian museums and discussed their participatory dimensions and development. As noted in the introduction, these project discussions are not intended to be an in-depth analysis. Rather they provide context for the discussion of the major case study for this PhD, *Basin Bytes*, and the institutional and industry environment from which the project has emerged.

CHAPTER 6

*Evaluating Basin Bytes:
Major case study and fieldwork*

6.1 Evaluating *Basin Bytes*: chapter overview and approach

This chapter presents the findings from evaluation research undertaken on *Basin Bytes*, an outreach project devised by the National Museum of Australia (NMA). I conducted qualitative research and fieldwork for three *Basin Bytes* projects in order to address the primary research question of this PhD that concern participatory practices in museums, and in my capacity as a member of the *Committing to Place (CTP)* research team (which had a broader set of research questions as outlined in Chapter 3).³⁹

After presenting a rationale for adopting an action research approach to data collection and outlining the evaluation research questions, Section 6.2 describes the *Basin Bytes* projects, traces how they came to fruition, and outlines the parameters for the evaluation research. The three projects – Echuca (Vic.), Wentworth (NSW), and the joint project between Goolwa (SA) and Toowoomba (Qld) – are then addressed independently and, in relation to the key project development phases.⁴⁰ Each discussion considers the participatory principles that resonate throughout this thesis – the choice to analyse each separately recognises the variables inherent in running participatory projects in different communities. However, each section is organised in relation to the same project development phases so as to facilitate comparative and critical analysis.

6.1.1 Evaluating *Basin Bytes*: an action research approach

The evaluation material presented is based on the research I carried out with key project stakeholders - participants, facilitators, project developers and other relevant community representatives. Although data collection was designed to include formal one-on-one interviews with all stakeholders, this was revised during fieldwork, particularly when working with facilitators, participants and interested community representatives. Planned face-to-face interviews with participants became either a recorded focus group discussion, telephone

³⁹ A substantial part of this chapter is adapted from the *Basin Bytes Evaluation Report* which was submitted before the third *Basin Bytes* project began (Wills, 2004). These reports are requirements of the CTP research and a brief report for the third project will be submitted outlining key recommendations and observations.

⁴⁰ The first two projects are discussed in greater detail – my involvement in the third project was more of a ‘watching brief’ due to timing and distance.

conversations, emails or chat at a coffee shop. There were certain times when it was more appropriate to discuss facilitators' despondency and/or problems with the project in an informal manner rather than subject them to a formal interview. This approach helped to address, and at times resolve, the problem at hand. I kept a field diary to record these informal interactions and any methodological changes, as well as my personal observations and experiences.

As such, my research approach reflects the discussion of action research in Chapter 3 that argued cooperation and transformation are central to participatory project development: "research 'with' rather than 'on' people" (Heron and Reason, 2001: 179). It supports the concept of conducting evaluation for informed project development, and demonstrates that a 'one size fits all' approach to participatory project development is not appropriate. Each community involved in the project had different needs and, where possible, these should be identified and integrated into the project design to achieve the best results. Thus the approach aimed to highlight the importance of museum workers building and sustaining relationships and stakeholder interaction, and to illustrate how it is a crucial ingredient in the process of project development and outcomes.

6.1.2 Evaluation research questions

This evaluation research has fulfilled two research requirements, the *CTP* project and this thesis. *CTP* researchers were particularly interested in whether or not cultural heritage projects could be a catalyst for engaging individuals who are normally not interested in NRM-related activities, and whether or not this engagement could stimulate and facilitate their participation in future NRM-related projects. Research for *CTP* included three broad research questions which were relevant to each of the projects that formed part of the *CTP* research:

In what ways do these outreach and education activities engage diverse communities?
Do these outreach and education activities influence engagement in NRM issues
What methods are useful for organisations to use in developing and implement outreach and educational activities that are meaningful for communities? (Lucas et al., 2005: 11).

To help guide evaluation research, an evaluation framework was developed for each *CTP* project, including each of the *Basin Bytes* projects. These frameworks

identified the key project stakeholders, outlined the project goals, and presented the major evaluation research parameters and questions (see Table 6A).⁴¹

Major evaluation research questions for <i>Basin Bytes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways was it engaging for (or of interest to) participants? • In what ways could it be improved to increase interest? • In what ways did it facilitate engagement with, and learning about local places and about the curatorial process? • What did it tell us about the ways that programs can effectively engage young people in NRM issues? • How effective was it as a participatory project? • What did it tell us about the delivery of effective participatory programs? • How does an action research approach to project development help facilitate better communication between museums and communities, and thus provide more tangible project outcomes? • How can museums benefit from increasing community engagement in program development?

Table 6A: Major evaluation research questions for *Basin Bytes*.⁴²

The intensive evaluation research conducted for *Basin Bytes* gave the CTP research team multiple perspectives from which to consider the overall CTP research questions (Wills, 2004; Lucas et al., 2005). Having frameworks and a set of guiding questions helped to organise research thematically and chronologically. By assessing the way participants were engaged, the structure, format and delivery of workshops, the processes and equipment required to undertake digital collecting, the development of online/web-based facilities to deliver the project and the ongoing evaluation process, I was able to provide recommendations for project improvement to the NMA and MDBC and develop a set of guiding principles for undertaking this type of community engagement work.

The CTP research questions contributed to the research interests in this dissertation. I applied an intensive action research approach to fieldwork and data collection in order to explore the participatory dimensions, and potential of these types of collaborative community outreach projects. The rationale for this was to test the adaptability of each project and the research, and to see whether the

⁴¹ This relates specifically to the research aims and objectives identified in Section 1.4 and Chapter 3 (above).

⁴² See Chapter 1, Section 1.4 for clarification of the research aims and objectives.

NMA's participatory intentions for the project maintained their integrity. By focusing on the different stakeholders, I was able to consider these dimensions from a range of perspectives. Further, I was able to use the evaluation to actively inform and improve the projects as they unfolded rather than provide feedback at the end. This approach helped me focus on the overall research question, to reflect on why museum outreach has not engaged more fully with existing models for participatory practices, and explore a number of other key sub-questions (see Table 6B).⁴³ These sub-questions are systematically addressed at the conclusion of each of the three projects.

Additional specific evaluation research questions for each <i>Basin Bytes</i> project	
1.	How were participatory and community engagement principles and practices used effectively in the execution of this project?
2.	In what ways did the principles of access, creativity, diversity, inclusion and learning manifest in the project?
3.	Was there potential for museums to learn from participatory models used in other disciplines?
4.	Did face-to-face communication help

Table 6B: Additional specific evaluation research questions for each *Basin Bytes* project.⁴⁴

It also kept the evaluation process 'live' – that is, there was a reason, other than good will, for stakeholders to reflect on the project's progress because there was an avenue via which their ideas and concerns could be channelled and received. This also meant that the boundaries between the evaluation and project management were somewhat blurred, and, to an extent, highlighted that a hands-on and face-to-face approach is still vital to the development of collaborative projects.

⁴³ This also reflects the research aims and objectives identified in Section 1.4 and Chapter 3 (above).

⁴⁴ See Chapter 1, Section 1.4 for clarification of the research aims and objectives.

6.2 *Basin Bytes*: background components, communities and evaluation parameters

Basin Bytes was an activity-based outreach and information and communications technology (ICT) based initiative of the NMA's Public Programs Division. It aimed to engage communities in the Murray-Darling Basin in the process of creating digital stories and images that reflect participants' understandings and interactions with their local environment. Under the guidance of a local facilitator, *Basin Bytes* participants uploaded stories and images onto an online, but secure, database. This material was then transferred to an online exhibition template and was published on the NMA's website. *Basin Bytes* helped the NMA achieve its objective to "reveal the stories of ordinary and extraordinary Australians", fit into the broad theme of people and the environment, and fulfilled the interest in expanding and enhancing its collection (NMA, 2006: website; NMA, 2005).

The project was a vehicle via which people living in rural communities could have greater access to the NMA and actively involved people in exploring and interpreting NRM and cultural heritage issues relevant to their area. The NMA anticipated that those participating in *Basin Bytes* would acquire photography and writing skills, and learn about the work of museums and cultural institutions. The MDBC hoped participation in the project would inspire some to learn more and/or get more involved in local NRM projects.

6.2.1 *From Young Rural Curators to Basin Bytes*

Basin Bytes was originally conceived as an outreach project called *Young Rural Curators* by Jodie Cunningham, former NMA Public Programs staff member. This project aimed to engage young people⁴⁵ from rural areas in curatorial activities, such as collecting, documenting, interpreting, and exhibiting. The initial concept for the project also included a competitive element and this, along with

⁴⁵ Defined, in this instance, as between 16 and 25.

digital photography, was to be the impetus for attracting interest and participation.⁴⁶

Administrative and institutional changes, however, altered the project concept and direction. The NMA was committed to the *CTP* project and as such a number of NMA outreach activities were realigned to fit within the project parameters. These projects became a suite of outreach projects known collectively as the *Murray-Darling Outreach Project* (NMA, 2002). In the case of *Young Rural Curators*, the impact of these changes included:

- Positioning the project in a collaborative yet intermediary space between two NMA departments (Public Programs and ICT)
- Locating the project geographically within the Murray-Darling Basin to reflect the interests of *CTP* project partner, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC)
- Directing the project thematically towards issues of place attachment and engagement with environmental issues
- Using information and communications (ICT) applications as the primary medium for project delivery.

Just as the project was being reconfigured to these new parameters, a new public programs staff member, Adam Blackshaw, took over the project while Cunningham worked on a different program.⁴⁷ Blackshaw's background in community cultural development helped steer the project towards a more participatory model. He challenged the definition of community as audience, and questioned the degree of community interaction required prior to finalising formal project boundaries:

⁴⁶ The idea for a competition was derived from the Australian Broadcast Authority Radio program for young rural Australians called *HeyWire* which involves submitting a story about living in regional and rural Australia: "Heywire is about speaking out raising the issues and being heard on the important things for you and young people from regional and rural places" (ABC, 2006: website).

⁴⁷ The NMA's Skylounge was another public program directed toward youth. It "gives young people a chance to express themselves by showing their work as part of a multimedia extravaganza" and is held during the summer months in the NMA courtyard (NMA, 2004: website).

I sense a slight problem ... we're not engaging the community in any of the early stages of this process. I'm adopting the principles of community cultural development which say you involve them in the framework of this, so I'm a little bit hesitant to frame up the project so much before we've even spoken to these community groups because I want to see us as facilitating *process*. The way to judge that we've done that effectively is that we become almost irrelevant to it... because they've taken ownership of it, they are empowered by it, they've been given the resources to do it and they are leading that process themselves (Blackshaw, 2003. NMA Public Project Manager Interview, 01.05.2003).

Blackshaw also believed the project had potential to influence participants' interest in their environment, as well as to promote self confidence. To do this, however, required project development and processes to be transparent, accessible and inclusive: "what is important is ... transformation [which] is only achieved by the process, [and] that process will only take place if they [the participants] have control over that process and we facilitate that process" (Blackshaw, 2003. NMA Public Project Manager Interview, 01.05.2003).

This contrasted with the more structured approach to developing projects that museum workers usually adopt and which often predetermine the outcomes. This includes reflecting on the education dimensions of projects, as Cunningham observed:

I'm used to giving quite strict parameters, certainly when I run a workshop I give strict parameters for strict learning outcomes. When people come here (NMA) it's much more an educational-based model rather than a community liaison model. This is where Adam and I intersect. He's much more interested in talking to the community with nearly no parameters. He's still interested in parameters, but certainly not as many as me (Cunningham, 2003. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview, 01.05.2003).

Identifying institutional benefits from running collaborative projects is another important consideration, one that Cunningham also highlighted in her interview:

This project isn't [just] about the community, it's also about the NMA's objectives and our objectives in Public Programs – to end up with some outputs like a website ... [with] packages of things that people have produced. ... [Hopefully these] communities have gained some understanding of what a museum is, and of what cultural heritage is, and why it's important (Cunningham, 2003. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview, 01.05.2003).

Both Blackshaw and Cunningham also identified learning from each other as an important professional development opportunity. Heavy workloads, however, meant Blackshaw took primary responsibility for reshaping the project within the new parameters of the *Murray-Darling Outreach Project*. *Young Rural Curators* underwent a name change – first to *Basin Voices* and then to *Basin Bytes*. The revised project retained the intention of engaging young people in curatorial

activities but was geared much more towards digital photography, using ICTs, and developing material for online content (see Appendix H *Basin Bytes* Fact Sheet). The learning dimensions remained multifaceted, and reflect, to a degree, the capacity this type of project had to appeal to participants with a range of learning styles, predispositions and interests (Gardner, 1983, 1996, 1999). By the time the first project began, three major goals for the *Basin Bytes* project were apparent:

- To engage young people in understanding and developing curatorial skills, such as collecting, documenting, interpreting and exhibiting material
- To engage young people in a participatory project that enhances their sense of place understanding of cultural heritage and natural resource management issues
- To promote an understanding of digital photography and the web-based database developed by the NMA (2003. Evaluation Framework Document *Basin Bytes* 03.06.2003).

6.2.1 Key components of Basin Bytes

The *Basin Bytes* concept had multiple dimensions and stakeholders. It worked at a community and participatory level, at a digital and ICT level, addressed issues at a museological level, and connected with issues relating to place and NRM participation. The key components of the project included:

Local facilitators

Each project was run by a facilitator who was a resident of the local community. Facilitators had a background in community cultural development (CCD), community arts or NRM and were sought by the NMA in consultation with local council workers and via community networks.

Community participants

The project engaged people who were residents in towns and communities in the Murray-Darling Basin. Initially, NMA Public Programs staff identified young people as the target group. However, the project could easily cater for, and was appealing to, participants outside this age group.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ This target group was in keeping with NMA Public Programs policy.

Project workshops

Facilitators ran a series of workshops to maintain the project momentum. Workshops aimed to promote participant interaction, discussion and group learning. They also provided participants with the chance to upload images and stories onto the project database.

Digital photography

Participants were loaned Canon PowerShot A70 cameras to use for the duration of the project. These cameras were chosen by NMA ICT staff because they are easy to operate, lightweight and produce high quality images. They have a range of functions, including audiovisual capability, and come with a 16MB flashcard.

Digital storytelling

Participants created stories to accompany their images. These stories added an interpretive dimension to the project and allowed each participant to explore and articulate their sense of place in greater depth.

Digital Collecting

Participants' images and stories became part of the NMA's digital collection and were initially uploaded to an online, but secure, database (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2).⁴⁹ The database was the learning tool which conveyed the importance of collection documentation and provenance. Collecting the information in this way enabled the NMA to manage information and documentation for the images in line with museum collection management practices.

⁴⁹ The NMA asks each participant to sign a copyright release form. The important issue of digital acquisition and significance is discussed in Section 6.6.

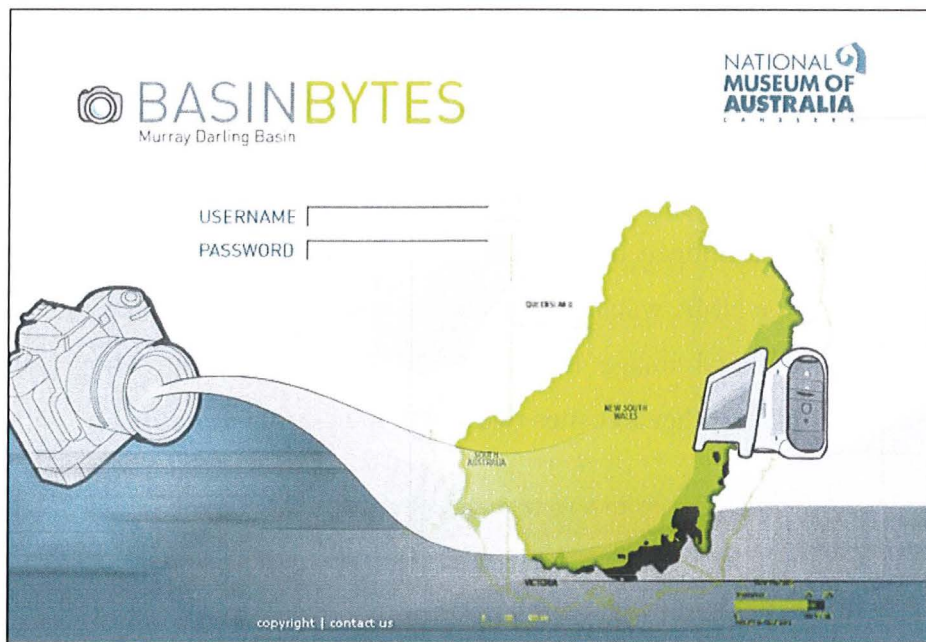


Figure 6.1: Entry screen to the Basin Bytes online database (NMA, 2003).

Curatorial skills

Basin Bytes aimed to promote curatorial skills and the processes involved in managing cultural heritage (see Figure 6.2). This included collecting, documenting, interpreting, communicating and exhibiting.

 The image shows a completed database entry in the Basin Bytes system. The header includes the 'BASINBYTES' logo, 'Murray Darling Basin', and a navigation menu with links: SEARCH, ADD PHOTO, MY ALBUM, HELP, PASSWORD, and LOGOUT. The main section is titled 'PHOTO DETAILS' and contains a table with the following information:

Taken by user:	Admin User	Date taken:	13/5/2004
File name:	picture_075.jpg	Title:	Murray and Darling Cod by Jade Temby
Subject:	Water Management Issues		
Description:	Huge cod died in the Darling River this year when knee water was flushed downstream.		
Place name:	Murray Darling Junction	Story:	The cod had been waiting in a few deep pools while the rest of the river was dry. When the knee water met them they were exposed to higher salinity and temperature levels. This was too much of a shock and they died. In April 2004 some Murray cod fingerlings were released from the Murray Darling Junction, as a positive measure to try to rectify the deaths. 25,000 cod will be released this year.
Nearest town/suburb:	Wentworth		
State:	NSW		

 Below the table is a 'PREVIEW' section with a photo of a person in a hat and waders standing in water. Above the photo are zoom options: 25% (400x300), 50% (800x600), 75% (1200x900), and Original Size (1600x1200).

Figure 6.2: A completed database entry from Wentworth Basin Bytes

Basin Bytes' website

An online exhibition was the major museological outcome for the project (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4). Once participants had completed their database entries, NMA staff developed online galleries as part of the community exhibitions section of the NMA website. Participants were also asked if they would like to develop a digital image to brand their local exhibition. They could also provide links to other websites relevant to their community.

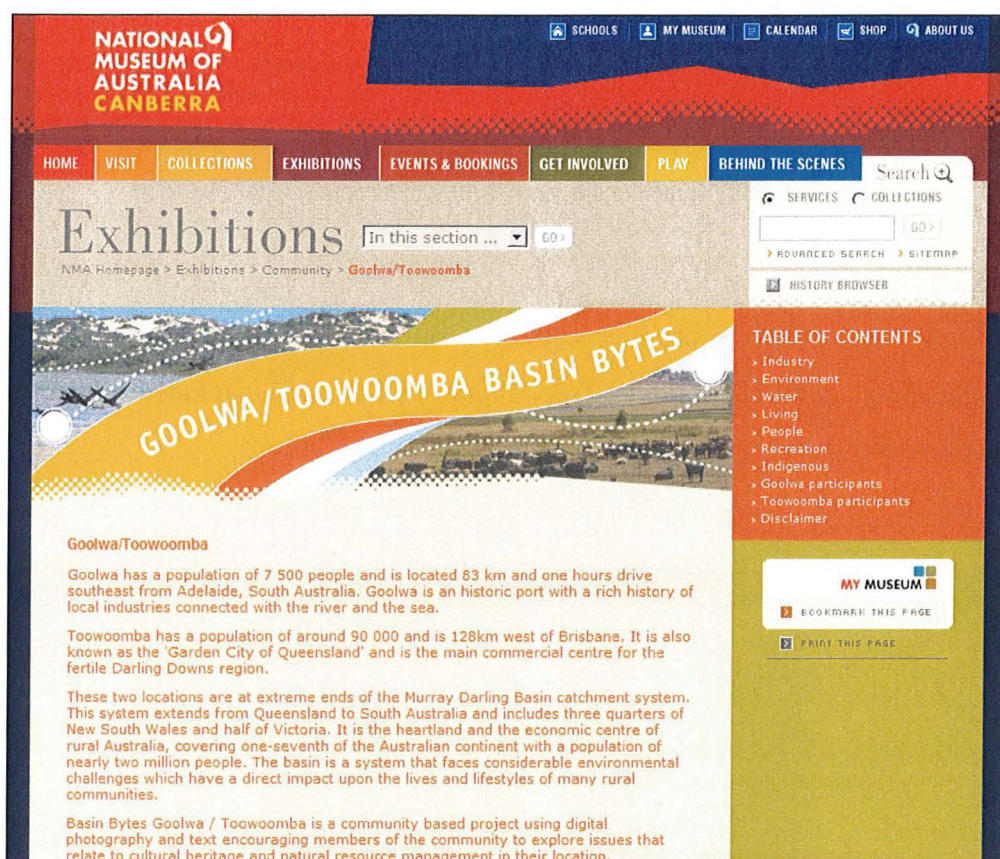


Figure 6.3: A section of the *Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes* entry page (NMA, 2006: website)

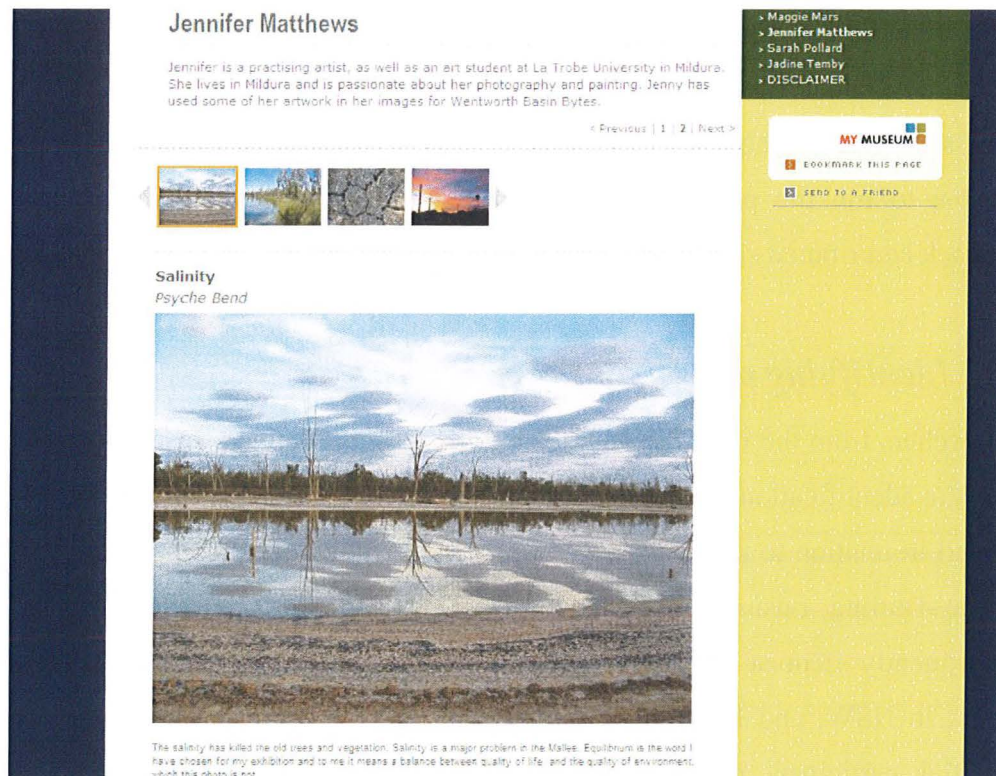


Figure 6.4: A 'byte' or gallery page from the *Wentworth Basin Bytes* (NMA, 2006: website).

Local exhibitions

Where possible, the facilitators arranged a project launch in a local venue where they displayed selected material that participants' created during the *Basin Bytes* project (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The Facilitator coordinated these events in conjunction with the local shire council or relevant gallery spaces.



Figure 6.5: Denis Shepard, NMA Curator, at the local launch of *Echuca Basin Bytes*, February 2004 [Photograph: Jo Wills].



Figure 6.6: Adam Blackshaw, NMA Public Programs Manager, at the local launch of *Goolwa Basin Bytes*, November 2005 [Photograph: Jo Wills].

In addition, evaluation research was part of the first three *Basin Bytes* projects. Having an evaluator present at workshops was necessary to explain the evaluation process to the participants, and to conduct the research. It would have been possible to run the project without this component, however, the continuous feedback contributed significantly to the project development and delivery.

6.2.3 *Identifying participant communities*

Researchers from the *CTP* research team undertook preliminary research to assist with the identification of participant communities.⁵⁰ Initially, ‘community’ was defined in relation to place and topography. A typology of landscapes within the Murray-Darling Basin was developed – river land, arid/semi arid, highland. Subsequently Echuca and Swan Hill in Victoria, Cobar, Cooma, Moree and Tumut in NSW, and Roma and Goondiwindi in Queensland were identified as potential participant communities.⁵¹ As Blackshaw was already engaged on another project in Echuca, he decided to link the development of *Basin Bytes* to a fieldtrip he was about to undertake in the area (Blackshaw, 2003. NMA Public Project Manager Interview, 01.05.2003).

This background research helped the project progress, however, when one reflects on the selection process from a participatory perspective, the overall selection process was somewhat limited and at time, indeed, somewhat biased. Why, for example, wasn’t the project advertised to communities in the Murray-Darling Basin through local councils, regional museums, NRM networks or other communities of practice so that they could express interest in participating? Of course, such an approach would potentially cause its own degree of exclusion. For example, it would depend greatly on an advertising strategy and even then there would be a danger that only those communities in a position to accommodate such calls might respond. However, those communities that were approached were not asked whether they would like to develop a project with the NMA and the

⁵⁰ The *CTP* research was also interested in exploring whether cultural heritage projects have the capacity to enhance NRM participation. Thus running the project with various types of communities, that is, communities of practice, diversity and interest as well as place would have been equally productive (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

⁵¹ This research profile was compiled primarily by Dr Damian Lucas April – May, 2003. One of the issues for identifying communities was to ensure representation of the four states that are part of the Murray-Darling Basin – while this list does not identify a South Australian community, the need for representation across the Basin was clearly understood by *CTP* research team.

MDBC, they were given a defined activity in which to engage. Although this is understandable – developing a collaborative project from scratch is a time consuming process – there was no consultation with or participation from community representatives in the initial design of *Basin Bytes*. Thus, it is legitimate to question the degree to which the project can be called ‘participatory’.

Similar concerns were raised by Blackshaw during his initial evaluation interview. He was cautious about the way the NMA approached potential communities and argued that they needed to have agency in terms of their involvement in the project.

We are asking them to do something, but I wonder what they want and what they want to do. Do they even want to be a part of this project? We're making all these grand assumptions: that they [do not] have a commitment to place and [that] we're going to facilitate a group. They may be the most committed people on the planet, we don't know yet (Blackshaw, 2003. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview, 01.05.2003).

Despite these misgivings, plans for a second *Basin Bytes* in Tumut, NSW were also made on the basis on the landscape typology. One could argue that this reflected a failure, on the part of the evaluation, to engage and influence upper museum management. Yet one must be mindful that busy institutions need to manage staff workloads and project commitments, and thus collaborative projects require a degree of pre-planning to ensure appropriate engagement and commitment.

Cunningham was scheduled to manage the second project but internal staffing changes meant Blackshaw assumed sole responsibility for the project. About the time these managerial changes were finalised, members of the *CTP* research team happened to meet a regional arts development officer from far western NSW, James Giddey, at a conference in Broken Hill, NSW.⁵² Giddey responded enthusiastically to the *Basin Bytes* concept which was outlined in the *CTP* team's conference presentation. He immediately nominated Wentworth as a community that would benefit from such a project and subsequently made contact with the local council, and the NMA, to investigate running the project there.

⁵² This meeting with Giddey fulfilled one of Blackshaw's goals that *Basin Bytes* be undertaken by Regional Arts Networks as a key stakeholder. He felt their interest and support would help give the project life after the NMA's Murray-Darling Basin project finished.

On this occasion I saw this project of being of value to Wentworth because they would like to establish a museum of the rivers. So they need a process to get community involvement and start to get ideas and stories from the community. The project will also create a lot of interest, I think, within Wentworth ... There's an idea down there that they want to build a sort of mausoleum type museum, but I've got an idea of turning the whole town ... or virtually the whole ... western region into a museum (Giddey, 2004. BBW Facilitator Mentor Interview 03.02.04).

Giddey's perception of community need and readiness for this type of activity was confirmed and supported by the Wentworth Shire Council. They determined to use the project to help raise awareness of another local NRM project and appointed a council employee to undertake the facilitation. Thus the selection of Wentworth as the location for the second *Basin Bytes* was driven from a local level, and this influenced the way the project developed substantially.

Blackshaw wanted to use the final *Basin Bytes* project as an opportunity to test whether the project's multimedia dimensions could facilitate links between communities. As South Australia and Queensland were yet to host a *CTP or Murray-Darling* project they were the starting point for identifying participant communities. Farming and land clearing in Queensland has had a substantial impact on the quality of water flowing through the rest of the Basin, particularly in South Australia where water has high salinity levels. Promoting awareness and greater understanding of the impact farming practices in the upper Basin have on the lower half of the Basin was, therefore, another impetus for identifying participant communities in these regions at either end of the Murray-Darling Basin. In this instance, Lawrie Kirk, MDBC Communications Manager, provided Blackshaw with a range of contacts and I conducted background research into potential communities. Blackshaw then made contact with the Alexandrina Council in South Australia and the Toowoomba Landcare Group in Queensland.⁵³

The selection of participant communities illustrates the different ways engagement can occur and the different type of participants that get involved as a result of the engagement methodology. More lead time, the distribution of project information so as to solicit responses from interested parties would have created

⁵³ Interestingly, CTP research team members presented a paper at another conference in Adelaide that generated more interest in the *Basin Bytes* project (Wills & Vanclay, 2004). In this instance, an Aboriginal man from Murray Bridge, South Australia, felt the project would be a way of reconnecting Aboriginal youth with their local environment. Blackshaw's interest in linking communities at the top and bottom of the Basin, however, meant Goolwa was a more attractive South Australian location.

very different kinds of projects to those that eventuated through more formal channels, and would have, undoubtedly, attracted different types of participants. However, such an approach reflects the ideal, and one needs to be mindful of the impact that timelines, budgetary constraints, and grant parameters have on devising an engagement strategy.

It is interesting to reflect, however, that the responsive approach that occurred in Wentworth, as opposed to the solicited engagement that occurred in the other projects, resulted in a project completed within a shorter timeframe. Further, most of the Wentworth participants responded to the advertisement on the basis of personal interest. This contrasts with those in the other projects where many participants were coopted either by local teachers or the facilitators.

6.2.3 Evaluation parameters: stakeholders, phases and tools

Key stakeholders and their goals

After preliminary research, the following stakeholders for the *Basin Bytes* projects were identified (see Appendix I for a more detailed breakdown of stakeholder goals).

Key stakeholders

- General NMA
- Public Programs, NMA
- ICT, NMA
- *Committing to Place* Research Team
- Local facilitators: Echuca, Wentworth, Goolwa, Toowoomba
- Participants

Other relevant stakeholders

- Murray-Darling Basin Commission
- Local council officers
- Local landcare groups
- Local arts practitioners

Evaluation phases, tools and materials

Phase	Activity
Preparing and developing the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NMA staff identify a potential participant community
Engaging and inducting project facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NMA staff liaise with local groups/council to identify a suitable local facilitator• NMA staff hire local facilitator• Facilitator attends induction process at NMA
Engaging participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitator identifies and enlists participants
Running the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants given (loaned) digital cameras• Participants create images and write stories• Facilitator runs workshops so participants can discuss their work and progress• Participants load images and text onto an online database• Participants select images and stories for inclusion on the final website• One participant designs a web banner for the site
Finalising the project: website and local launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NMA staff transfer images to template web pages and create online galleries for each participant• NMA staff check and edit written material• Project is launched on the NMA website• Facilitator arranges a physical exhibition/event in a local venue to coincide with the website launch
Reflections and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report writing• General reflection

Table 6C: Key phases in *Basin Bytes* programs.

Evaluation phases

Although *Basin Bytes* was adaptable to community-specific requirements, it generally comprised the following key phases outlined in Table 6C (above).

Evaluation tools and materials

Two sets of materials were evaluated at part of the project. The first set comprises the data that were collected as part of the formal evaluation, that is:

- Formal taped interviews: project developers, project facilitators
- Participant observation: during induction, fieldwork, workshops and at launch
- Taped audio journals (see Appendix J): participants
- One focus group interview: a taped discussion at the end of the last workshop (Wentworth)

- Informal communications: phone, email
- Face to face communications: interaction at NMA and informal fieldwork liaison
- Personal diary and taped audio journal: evaluator

The second set comprises the material the participants generated as part of the project. Although this was not generated specifically for the evaluation, analysis of this material is useful and includes:

- Images: those used on the database and those used on the website
- Website: both participant gallery components and the entire website
- Stories: interpretations and descriptive material
- Website banners: designed by community
- Printed material from the project: as used in local exhibitions

Fieldwork in any research project requires a level of flexibility and resourcefulness. Fitting evaluation research around the imperatives of the *Basin Bytes* projects has necessitated methodological revision, flexibility and reflection. The intensive approach to the evaluation research with project developers, facilitators and participants meant interaction with other stakeholders took a backseat. Meeting with a range of people in communities was not always possible during fieldwork due to timings and competing workloads. Discussions with many of these people, such as representatives from the local shire, were consequently conducted via phone, email, or in short meetings.

6.3.1 Preparing and developing the project

As discussed in Section 6.2.1, pre-project planning for *Basin Bytes* via the *Young Rural Curators Project* began in 2002. The selection of Echuca as the site of the first *Basin Bytes* was also addressed in Section 6.2.3.

In May 2003, Blackshaw began negotiating with Arts and Cultural Development Officer at the Shire of Campaspe, Irene Pagram, who agreed to help identify a suitable local facilitator.⁵⁵ However, as Pagram went on leave shortly afterwards, and her replacement moved to a different position, there were delays in finding a suitable facilitator. Blackshaw eventually made contact with a locally-based artist with a background in community cultural development (CCD). Paul Gamble was subsequently hired as the *Echuca Basin Bytes* facilitator⁵⁶, and the project formally began in early August 2003.

During this period, Blackshaw also worked with staff in the ICT section to refine the project tools, purchase suitable digital cameras, and develop a tender for building the database. Including a community representative in these discussions would have enhanced the project's participatory dimensions and increased community ownership (and thus understanding) of the project as a whole. Internal dynamics at the NMA, including changing managerial personnel, made this somewhat difficult. Project delays, particularly the outsourcing of the database construction, as well as the late identification of the facilitator meant involvement at a managerial was not possible even though Blackshaw acknowledged it was desirable in evaluation interviews during the first facilitator induction: "I was always concerned that the community wasn't involved in the project from the outset so now it is great that at least a member of the community is" (Blackshaw, 2003. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview, 07.08.2003).

⁵⁵ Pagram's interest in the project stemmed partly from the fact that Echuca does not have a gallery space to display contemporary ideas or youth perspectives – she felt the web could be a good way for Echuca to address these types of issues.

⁵⁶ A further delay followed as I was not able to start the evaluation phase until the beginning of August. Although this did not impact on the behind the scenes organisation, including finding a facilitator, it did influence the timing of the induction phase in Canberra.

6.3.2 Identifying and inducting the project facilitator

In August 2003 Gamble attended an induction session at the NMA. This included a project overview, contract negotiation, evaluation interview, tour of the NMA and meetings with the ICT staff to discuss the project's equipment and tools.

Tour of the NMA's *Eternity* Gallery

NMA curator, Sophie Jensen, took Gamble, Blackshaw and I on a tour of the Eternity Gallery.⁵⁷ The thematic focus of this gallery, which reflects Zeldin's (1993, 1995) emotional approach to history, appealed to Gamble's artistic and CCD background.⁵⁸ The tour provoked much discussion about curatorial development and process and helped to build rapport between Blackshaw, Gamble and I. Blackshaw and Jensen also reflected that greater interaction between their departments would promote more creative projects and programs. Thus, the induction process also helped promote creative interdepartmental interaction and exchange in the NMA in relation to community projects as well as facilitator engagement.

Evaluation interview

In the evaluation interview, Gamble outlined his aspirations for the project and the potential benefits for participants. His remarks echo some of the issues and concerns that were addressed in the literature review in Chapter 2, such as the 'peculiarities of rural exclusion' in a museum context (Dodd & Sandell, 2001: 103), and the social problems in rural communities that Bourke (2001) discussed:

I'd like to see that the young people do gain confidence and experience and don't think ... [that just because they went] to high school in Echuca [they] have to just work in the milk bar here. You can go to high school here, go off and have a life, and come back and do something important. That's one of the goals immediately that I'd like to share with these young people – that they're not restricted by their rural status. Just because you're in a small rural area doesn't mean you're not creative, doesn't mean you're not intelligent, doesn't mean you can't work on these projects.

⁵⁷ The Eternity Gallery is one of the permanent galleries in the NMA and "is a glimpse into Australia's past, present and future through the lives, emotions and experiences of its people" (NMA, 2006: website). The exhibition focuses on 10 emotions – thrill, passion, joy, mystery, loneliness, chance, hope, fear, devotion and separation – and "brings to life the personal stories of 50 ordinary and extraordinary Australians" (NMA, 2006: website).

⁵⁸ This is also a classic example of Tilden's (1977) interpretive principles, particularly with regards to connecting interpretation to the experience of the visitor.

I'd like to give the museum more than what they are actually after. I almost want them to say 'wow!', ... be ... happily shocked. I'd really like the museum to think, once they get this back from the young people, 'we definitely have to do this again!' (Gamble, 2003. BBE Facilitator Interview 07.08.2003).

Prior to the induction process, Gamble had already been in contact with local schools to promote the project to potential participants. This initiative, however, did not correspond with the NMA's aspirations to work with youth outside the school network. Although disappointed by this development, Blackshaw did not move to intervene. He observed that Gamble had undertaken this contact before being formally contracted to work on the project, and was mindful of the issues that could arise in such instances (Blackshaw, 2004. NMA Public Programs Manager interview, 07.08.2004). Institutional goals need to be impressed upon contractors as soon as possible, however, this need alters the project's participatory status.

ICT

The induction process included a session with ICT staff to discuss the technology. Only a brief period was allocated for Gamble to familiarise himself with the cameras, an issue compounded by the fact that Gamble was not able to take a camera with him to continue exploring its capability.⁵⁹

The database and interface were incomplete, and the delays affected the project start date. Importantly, however, this facilitated more participatory project development – it allowed for productive discussion and gave Gamble the chance to query the accessibility of industry-specific language and suggest refocusing the database fields. Thus, the facilitator was able to contribute to refining the project tools and develop a sense of ownership and creative engagement (JW Field Journal Entry, 07.08.2003).

6.3.3 Engaging participants

In Gamble's absence, the council also contacted local schools to seek support for the project and ask them to help find participants. Teachers identified those

⁵⁹ The camera had to be formally listed on the NMA's asset register and at that stage did not have a protective case.

students they thought might benefit from being involved. As noted above, working within the formal education environment in this manner had not been the goal of NMA project developers. Thus, Gamble's leadership and the council's initial intervention, meant the choice of schools as the initial target group specifically influenced the project direction and parameters. However, the schools provided access to computer laboratories and, as Echuca did not have a suitable internet café at the time, access to these facilities was crucial.

Gamble also approached the local youth network, *Lead-On*, for interested participants (Gamble, 2003. *Pers. Comm.*). There were two participants from outside the school network both of whom knew Gamble independently via his other job. Towards the end of 2003, Gamble's partner, Louann Bennett, also became a participant and developed her own byte for the website. Ultimately, seven of the final eleven participants were students at either the Echuca Secondary College or Echuca High School. Of the eleven participants there were seven females and four males – including Gamble who created his own 'byte'.

Engaging and maintaining participants' interest in the project proved difficult because of the delays and the way the participants were recruited. One female from the Secondary College dropped out half way through the project due to personal issues (Gamble, 2003. *Pers. Comm.*). The youngest participant from the High School also pulled out in the middle of the project – the main reason for her withdrawal was personal, although she did note she was involved in too many extra-curriculum activities. Nonetheless, during the short time she was involved in *Basin Byes* she raised the issue of youth suicide.⁶⁰ Although she was unsure how to express these ideas using the photographic medium, her subject choice illustrates the potential for this type of project to address issues of great importance for rural and regional communities. Addressing such an important subject for rural communities would have highlighted the potential of this type of project as a medium via which complex issues could be tackled. Further, it

⁶⁰ Mental health and youth suicide is a major issue in Australia, particularly regional Australia (Bourke, 2001; Gray and Lawrence, 2001). Figures indicate suicide is a particular problem for young men, however, Bourke (2001) notes that reporting inaccuracies and the high rate of failed female suicide attempts mean the problem is clearly complex and not gender specific.

illustrates tensions between the intended subject matter of projects, from an institutional perspective, and the fact that participants might want to explore different issues, or feel that other issues are more important. Clearly, youth suicide is not an NRM issue and thus takes the project outside the intended subject matter. However, when one examines other participants' material it is evident that she was not alone in wanting to push the project's boundaries. One of the older males, Danial Cardno, was prepared to step outside the subject limitations and address issues of dislocation, music and work – perhaps being older meant he was more confident to pursue his own interests. Thus one can argue that the young woman's withdrawal was a missed opportunity – for both the participant and the project.

6.3.4 *Running the project*

Facilitation

As predicted in Gamble's initial evaluation interview, some participants' lack of self-esteem affected their engagement with the project (Gamble, 2003). Part of his facilitation role, therefore, comprised convincing some of the participants that people in rural areas had lives, ideas and stories that were interesting enough to become part of an online gallery. His vision for creating exciting and exploratory images gave way to just trying to get participants to take a picture (Gamble, 2004. *Pers. Comm.*).

Gamble also decided to be an active project participant so he could understand the process of image and story development. He was also keen to express himself creatively and produced a number of thoughtful pieces that combined his artistic skills with reflections about landscape (see Figure 6.8).

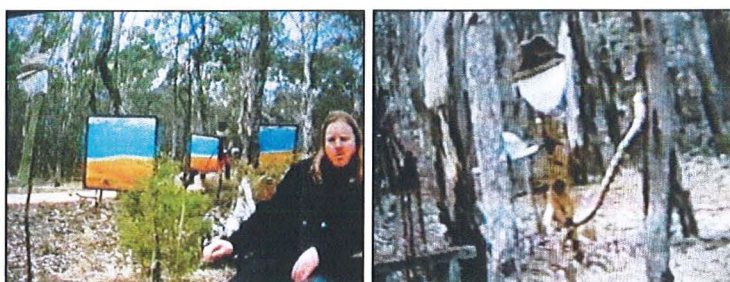


Figure 6.8: Two of the images Gamble produced for the project, both of which depict his artwork in the local landscape [Photographs: Paul Gamble, 2003].

From an administrative perspective, invoice payment was slow and caused the facilitator, and by proxy Blackshaw, a degree of difficulty. For external contractors, invoices are income, and therefore every effort should be made to pay them promptly. This issue is not dissimilar to the need for prompt delivery of equipment and technology – delays and problems affect the types of relationships and goodwill that museums build with external clients and agents.

Training workshops

The workshops were not the collaborative and creative environment that Blackshaw had originally envisaged. This was mostly due to the participants' ages and the fact that workshops were run at school during school hours. Participants from the two different schools were minors and thus unable to meet after school hours. The other participants met with Gamble individually. Thus, *Echuca Basin Bytes* participants never met as a group and, as a result, the collaborative dimensions of the project were restricted – with particular regards to social and group learning.

Participant interest and commitment was difficult to maintain because of the limited time and conditions under which Gamble had to run the project. As most of the student participants saw the project as a school assignment, timing was crucial. Gamble visited both schools on a weekly basis. These sessions were held in the school computer labs during the lunch break of approximately 45 minutes (see Figure 6.9). Gamble and participants thus had access to computers but the crowded labs were distracting and noisy. The art teacher from the Secondary College, Norm Wright, took an active interest in the project from the beginning and gave students time to work on the project during their photography class. He observed, however, that the project might have been more successful had it been run during the first half of the school year when there was less pressure on the students rather than the period leading up to exams (JW Field Journal Entry 16.12.2003, Echuca). It should be noted, of course, that the NMA had not intended school students to be the main participants. Thus, this discrepancy of timing was one of the unforeseeable consequences of the initial approach to schools for participants.



Figure 6.9: Paul Gamble, *Echuca Basin Bytes* facilitator, with participants Maxine Vale and Kylie Russell, working on *Basin Bytes* in the school computer laboratory [Image courtesy of the Riverine Herald, 1 December 2003].

I decided to adapt the evaluation research methods and run interviews in a more informal manner when I saw the environment in which Gamble was trying to run the project. As a result, participant observation, informal interaction and notations in my field diary took precedence to the planned taped interviews. Halfway through the project, however, I provided participants with tape recorders on which to record audio journals and these were used by some to good effect.⁶¹

The older participants liaised with Gamble on a one-on-one basis and met him at his house to upload their images or discuss issues. Gamble noted he often had difficulty contacting them and keeping them focused on the project.

Technology and equipment

Cameras

Although Gamble began working with the students in August 2003 he did not receive the cameras until October. Participants were keen to be involved but this delay impacted on their enthusiasm and contributed to some becoming disengaged prior to beginning work on the project. Gamble found it difficult to keep explaining why the equipment wasn't available. Eventually, one of the participants used a different camera in order to get started – this illustrated both interest and frustration (Gamble, 2003. *Pers. Comm.*).

Once the cameras arrived, the participants quickly adapted to the technology. Individual instruction manuals would have helped each participant explore the

⁶¹ The use of taped journals was prompted by the successful use of taped journals during the evaluation of one of the other CTP project – the Riverhealth Conference (Lucas et al., 2003).

capacity of the cameras in more detail. Similarly, it would have been beneficial to have more than one download cable as the 16MB memory cards filled up quickly and participants were unable to upload images as often as they would have liked. Gamble often had to leave the camera cable with the participants and pick it up from the school the following day. Despite these problems, there was high engagement with the cameras. One of the participants reflected that the camera was always by his side and changed the way he looked at the town. He noted that giving it up at the end of the project would be extremely difficult (Cardno, 2003. *Pers. Comm.*).

Database

The database did not fulfil the objective to communicate the importance of documenting material in a museum setting. Problems and delays meant that only a few of the participants could access the database online and thus prevented them from uploading their images and filling out the database:

We didn't have much luck with getting our photos ... from our school folders onto our *Basin Bytes* account, which was pretty hard. I'm not sure if it was the school system or if it was the other end, maybe the *Basin Bytes* end of the thing ... I only got like three photos, I think it was, into my actual *Basin Bytes* folder but I had, like, 70 photos or something in my school folder (Butcher, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript 10.12.2003).

Accessing the database became so problematic that many of the participants started to email their images and stories to Gamble and he entered the information. This meant that many of the participants did not engage with the curatorial dimensions of documentation and interpretation as originally intended and many of the images were information poor.⁶² Even when the database did work, its purpose, and what happened to the material once it was loaded, was not necessarily apparent:

I didn't really get a clear understanding of where our photos would go once they reached our *Basin Bytes* account. I had three photos, but I didn't even know where they were going to go once they were in my folder. So I think maybe a bit more information, or maybe I had information but I just didn't read it. But I wasn't sure of where they would go after that. (Butcher, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript, 10.12.2003).

This confusion reflects the limited time Gamble had to discuss the project with the participants, and also suggests that more supporting project information would

⁶² This significantly reduced their significance from a cultural heritage perspective and meant that the curatorial dimension of the project was of limited success. The issue of digital content also raised the issue of a digital collection and the need for the NMA to have collection policy that specifically related to digital material.

assist participant comprehension. Some of the participants highlighted problems that echoed earlier NMA concerns – many found the database and interface dull and unengaging, while others felt that the fields needed to be more clearly articulated, while some simply wanted more room in which to write their story.

Website

The *Basin Bytes* website did not meet the expectations of the program developers nor was there consensus between NMA departments as to requirements. Public Programs staff were concerned with the website's appeal, colour, vitality and interactivity; ICT staff were more concerned with the specifications and technicalities of getting images to upload to the database and developing the templates on which the gallery would be built. Useability and interactivity are both important issues, and it is important to note that neither ICT nor Public Programs were fully satisfied with the way the technology worked for this project.

During the early stages of development, Blackshaw was concerned that it would be a scroll-through slideshow website and therefore looked for an example that he felt had an interesting level of web-based interactivity. He identified an online example from the UK called *Hype Gallery* which simulates the experience of visiting and moving through a gallery – by clicking on an image the visitor can access more information (see Figure 6.10).

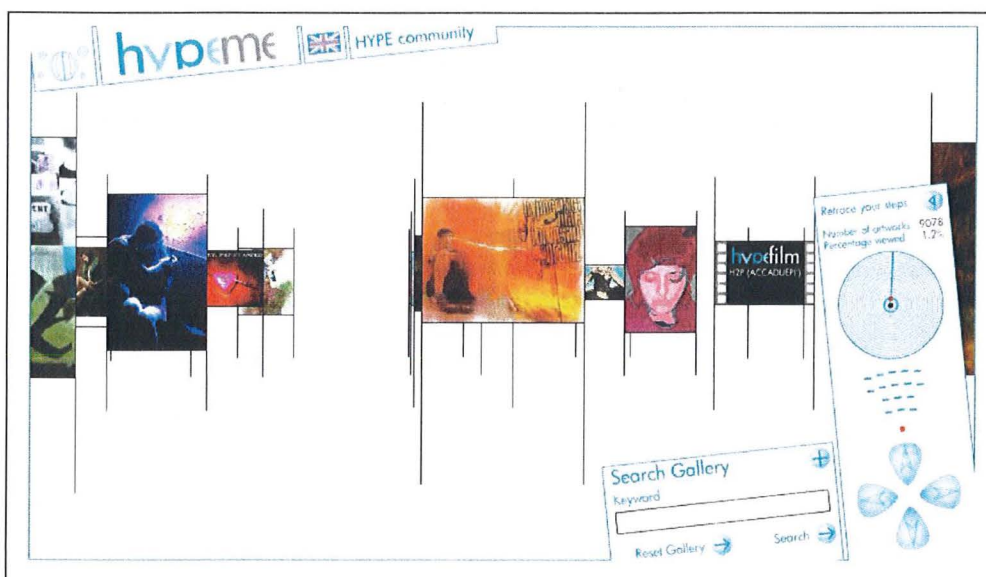


Figure 6.10: A page from UK Hype Gallery website which Blackshaw identified as a potential model for *Basin Bytes* [Image courtesy Hype Gallery, 2006: website (www.hypegallery.com)].

This type of site could have facilitated more creative and interpretive *Basin Bytes* presentations (Blackshaw, 2004. NMA Public Programs Manager interview, 02.03.2004). Budgetary constraints, however, and the NMA's website template format, restricted the scope of the website. Thus, the final website is a passive-receptive experience, one that is in stark contrast to the experiences of participants in the production of their content.

Although the ICT Department supervised the database development and designed the website, delays and glitches affected their ability to meet project timelines. NMA ICT project manager, Andrew Remeley, agreed that ICT-related delays had a ripple effect on the whole project (Remeley, 2004. *Pers. Comm.*). For example, the online database was still in development when the project began and took considerably longer to develop than anticipated.

Further, as the database was constructed by contractors, ICT staff had to translate the conceptual dimensions of the project into a technical brief. This reflected the different terminology and language that different departments within and without the NMA use. Remeley noted that the database brief specified a need to be able to transport images straight to the website template pages. Figure 6.11 illustrates the process originally envisaged for the database and its link to the NMA website. As the cross indicates, however, this did not eventuate. Therefore, an ICT staff member had to manually transfer and compile the final website once participants had uploaded their images to the database. This greatly increased the potential for images and captions to be muddled and thus misrepresent participants' work and stories.

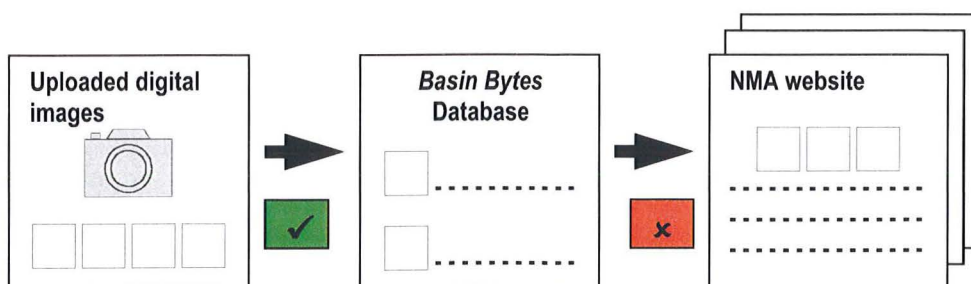


Figure 6.11: Process of developing the Echuca Basin Bytes online material: from digital image to database worked, from database to website was unsuccessful.

Project Content

The themes of emotion in the NMA's Eternity Gallery influenced the way Gamble conceptualised and 'sold' the project to participants. Gamble suggested participants focus on telling stories about how they felt about living in Echuca and how they felt about their surrounding environment.

Although participants produced a variety of stories, a number of key themes emerge from the material (see Figure 6.12):

- River recreation – fishing, water-skiing, boating, paddle steamers, walking along the riverbank
- After school activities – art classes, dancing, pets
- Culture and arts – music, painting
- Community history – built heritage, local stories of place
- Working in Echuca – past and present.

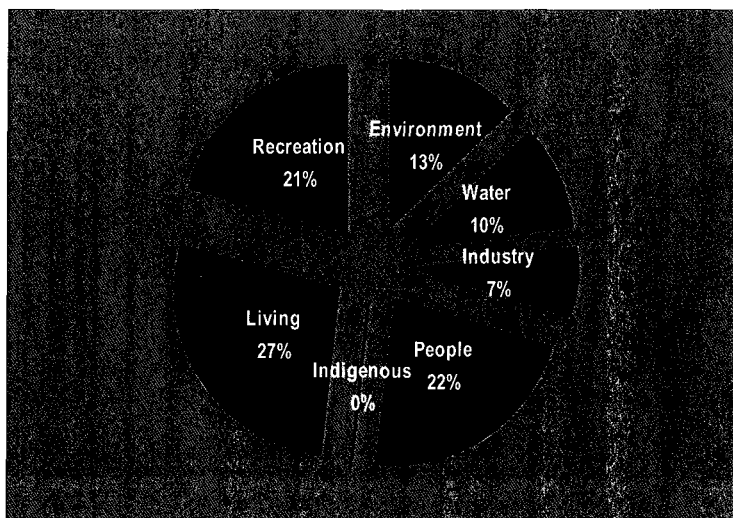


Figure 6.12: *Basin Byte Echuca* Thematic Breakdown

Images

Some the participants were interested in testing the ability of the cameras, particularly the audiovisual functions. However, the majority of the images are documentary rather than artistic or creative.

Stories

Although participants were keen collectors and creators of images, they were generally less interested in documenting and interpreting their work. The curatorial component of the project was, thus, a secondary consideration, and some participants did not write a story at all. The project's thematic flexibility caused a degree of anxiety, a reaction that was perhaps, indicative of the participants' ages. One could argue that having a clear topic for the project was crucial but also remember that projects with strict boundaries, or themes that have been pre-defined by an external entity or institutions, have an impact on a project's participatory dimensions.

Despite this, a number of the participants' stories drew on detailed research and creative interpretation. Two participants specifically addressed an increased awareness of place in their audio journals, but this did not necessarily translate to an awareness of NRM issues. One participant revealed: "After doing this project, I am in awe of where I live. I've come to realise how committed the community of Picola is" (Vale, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript (day date not noted) 10.2003). Another reflected:

it was good that I was able to stop and think about how many opportunities that we do have in Echuca. Like, I didn't realise how involved people got with some things and how big something like dancing is (Picone, 2003. Audio Journal Transcript, 10.12.2003).

Some of the material reflects a definite sense of place and a willingness to explore cultural heritage through artefacts, built heritage, community heritage and landscape. These stories explore human and cultural dimensions of NRM and some involved extended family and friends in taking the images and creating the stories. Further, one can also reflect on the stories in relation to Gardener's (1983; 1999) theory on multiple intelligences as they demonstrate the different learning styles and approaches individuals use to make sense of and interpret experiences.

Maxine Vale, (age c.15)



Figure 6.13: Maxine Vale's story takes audience through Picola, her hometown in northern Victoria [Photographs: Maxine Vale, 2003].

Maxine's story focused on a journey through her hometown of Picola, where her family live and farm.

I wanted to be involved in the *Basin Bytes* project because I thought it would give me a chance to research and learn more about my home town, Picola, and let me enjoy taking photos and telling others about Picola.

This hasn't changed as the project has progressed, because I still like to tell everyone where I come from and how proud I am of it. What I like about the project is being able to put my stories and my photos on the internet so anyone and everyone from all over the world can read and see them and understand where the very small town of Picola is (Vale, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript (day date not recorded) 10.2003).

Louann Bennett (age c.30)



Figure 6.14: Murray Cod and fishing. The striking fish head portrait (third from left) has intrigued many visitors to the *Echuca Basin Bytes* website, and has been a popular image at project presentations [Photographs: Louann Bennett, 2003].

Louann explored the local river – her memories of Murray Cod⁶³ and fishing with her father. She noted that she has always had an affinity with the landscape and that this project enhanced her sense of connection and gave her the opportunity to express this creatively (Bennett, 2003. *Pers. Comm.*).

Charlie Davison⁶⁴ (age c.25)



Figure 6.15: Music, snooker and work: a different formative environment [Photographs: Charlie Davison, 2003].

'Charlie' interpreted the environment somewhat differently. He adopted a narrative approach to his 'byte' and photographed what he saw as he went about his daily activities. His 'byte' captured his long weekend road trip, snooker and workplace – they reflect the rhythms of his own life rather than the natural

⁶³ Murray Cod is Australia's largest freshwater fish. It is found in the major rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin but overfishing, introduced species (particularly European Carp) river regulation and river de-snagging have contributed to a substantial decline in numbers.

⁶⁴ Participant requested a pseudonym.

environment. In many ways, his work illustrated a sense of disconnection with the natural environment – leaving Echuca, relaxation and his work at the local supermarket.

Callum Butcher (age c.15)



Figure 6.16: Practice makes perfect: water skiing in Echuca
[Photographs: Callum Butcher, 2003].

Cal expressed a desire for more project information and a group meeting to discuss the project. He used the camera to explore his love of water skiing and river recreation, and engaged his friends to help him take videos and still images. He endeavoured to capture the skills involved in various skiing manoeuvres, and was disappointed that the video facility could not be used on the web. He had thought of using stills from a video to tell his story, but had to adapt his approach:

We don't need to, but it would be really good fun, if we had a video camera and made a movie, even a ten minute movie ... of our town or of what we do and how we make fun ... I think it would be good to use a video camera that way. They say one picture takes a thousand words but with a movie you can speak ten thousand words in two seconds. So it would be good to use that and get a whole audio and visual aspect of it at the same time (Butcher, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript 10.12.2003).

Website Development

There was genuine interest in the website component of the exhibition. Indeed, the participatory dimensions of the project could have been extended by involving participants in the web design. One participant in particular noted:

I would have liked to have seen ... the design of the web page because I think it's our work and we should have a choice whether or not we want to do something ... like design the page ... I love designing things so to do something like that would be a great experience. I think the web page should have been set up before they gave us the cameras and before we got into it ... [but the] web page wasn't ... set up ... so we couldn't access it (Picone, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript 10.12.2003).

This interest, however, faded during the latter part of the project when the database was malfunctioning. These problems meant that most of the participants were disengaged when it came to thinking about their online pages. The gap between the end of the project (in terms of picture-taking and setting up the

website) and the actual online launch also contributed to *Echuca Basin Bytes* participants disconnecting with the project.

Website Banner

The NMA website allows for project specific graphic banners for online projects, and Blackshaw believed this could be another participatory dimension of the project. In Echuca, however, this opportunity was introduced belatedly and none of the participants expressed interest. Ultimately, Blackshaw extended Gamble's contract to allow him to design the graphic banner and create content for the introductory page to the project (see Figure 6.16).



Figure 6.17: *Echuca Basin Bytes* graphic banner, designed by Paul Gamble, 2004.

To some extent, this reflects the participants' disengagement with the project: many were frustrated with the database, and the competing pressure of exams eventually took precedence. Had this dimension of the project been addressed at the start, however, the participants may have shown more interest, as demonstrated by the excerpt from Picone's audio journal in the quotation above.

6.3.5 Finalising the project: local launch, website and exit

Local launch

During an informal project meeting between Pagram, Gamble, and I, Pagram offered the Tower Room in the Council offices as a venue for the project launch. She also suggesting tying the opening to Youth Week (JW Field Journal Entry 16.12.2003, Echuca). Linking the launch to another event gave the project a degree of momentum and, Blackshaw reflected "in retrospect you could have geared it towards that being the end date anyway. I think that's quite good" (Blackshaw, 2004. NMA Public Programs Manager interview, 03.02.2004).

Although Council supported the launch in principle, they had minimal involvement in the preparation. Gamble designed the invitation (see Figure 6.18), set up the room and arranged for some of the images to be printed and framed.

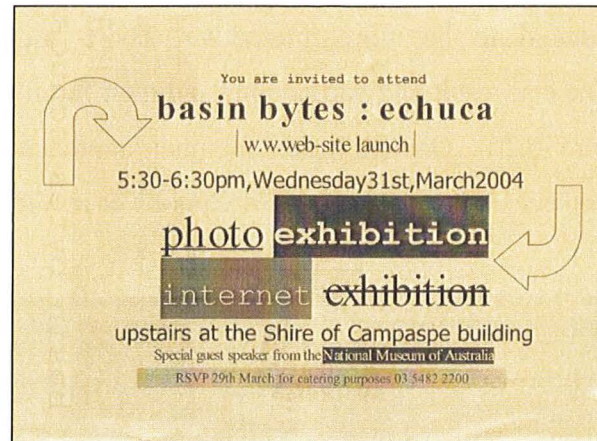


Figure 6.18: Echuca Basin Bytes invitation.

Enlarged prints of participants' images were of a substandard quality because the camera settings were on the small image size for uploading purposes. As a result, future facilitators ensured the cameras were set for higher resolution images. Gamble was also asked to fax materials to local media by the NMA marketing division. When he reflected on this process after the launch, Gamble noted he was surprised by this request, particularly as he did not have access to appropriate equipment and it came only days before the launch.⁶⁵

Echuca Basin Bytes was launched at the Shire of Campaspe offices on March 31st 2004 by NMA Curator, Denis Shepherd as neither the NMA Director or Blackshaw were able to attend (see Figure 6.19). Members of the local council and approximately half the participants were present for the launch. Each participant was presented with a certificate that acknowledged their participation and contribution. Of those that did attend, two were delighted with the end result. Prior to the launch, one of the participants had reflected that during the gap between the project end and the launch she had moved on and thought the project would not eventuate (Vale, 2004. *Pers. Comm.*). Her enthusiasm about the site, therefore, was a marked contrast to the disinterest I had noticed prior to the school holidays (JW Field Journal Entry, 01.04.2004).

⁶⁵ Gamble had not realised that this would be required and had not factored it into his work schedule. As a contractor, he was also working on another project the request put unexpected pressure on his work commitments.

Accessing the site from the homepage of the NMA website was not possible at the launch.⁶⁶ Some people got lost in the site while others could not understand how to get back to the introduction page. A number of people felt the map on the front page had the potential to be more interactive. There was, however, great enthusiasm about the end result and participants and their families were extremely satisfied (see Figure 6.20). One audience member approached Gamble about running a similar project in the nearby town of Gunbower in Victoria.



Figure 6.19: Dennis Shepherd (NMA), Maxine Vale, Kylie Russell, Irene (council) and Gamble holding the Youth Week flag at the *Echuca Basin Bytes* launch, 31 March, 2004 [Photograph: Jo Wills].



Figure 6.20: Louann Bennett at the *Echuca Basin Bytes* launch, March 31, 2004. Note the fish head portrait on screen, jointly created by her and Paul [Photograph: Jo Wills].

Online exhibition

A number of the participants' 'bytes' are somewhat sketchy (see Figure 6.21). Gamble recognised this problem but was hindered by limited access to the students and problems with the database. Louise Picone for example, felt that her 'byte' was not representative of the amount of work and effort she put into the project and is a direct reflection of the problems she had with the database:

I'm feeling like I haven't got anything to show for it, because I haven't been able to put anything on the site. I know I've taken hundreds of pictures but I haven't been able to show anyone that I've done anything (Picone, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript 10.12.2003).

The problem with the technology in this instance, then, reflects poorly on one of the participants. Thus, the capacity to revisit and review the website once it has been launched should be factored into project development.

⁶⁶I noticed the glitch when reviewing the site and was able to set the computers on the entry page before the launch began.

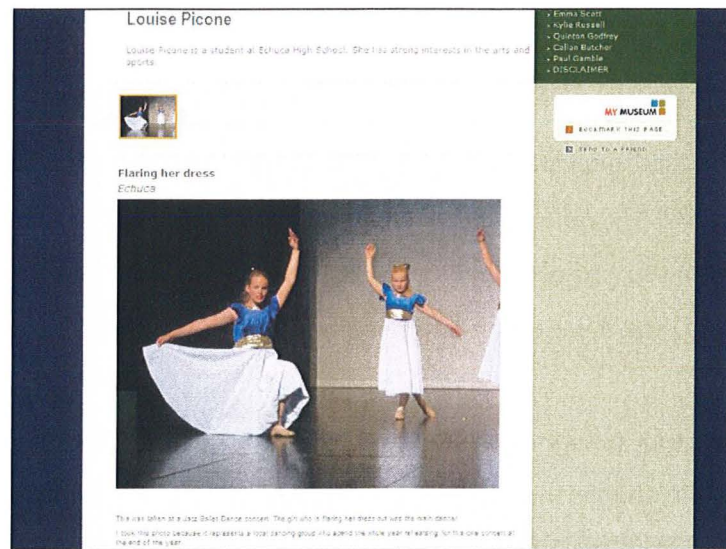


Figure 6.21: Louise Picone's single image 'byte' [NMA, 2004: website].

Exit strategy

There was no formal exit strategy for the *Echuca Basin Bytes* project. Essentially, the project finished with the launch and presentation of certificates. During the launch I discussed the project with each of the participants, as well as with Pagram, providing them with an opportunity to reflect on their experience (JW Field Journal Entry, 31.3.2004, Echuca).

I conducted two post project interviews with Gamble – the first immediately after the launch and the second after a joint presentation at the Museums Australia conference in May 2004 (Wills et al. 2004).⁶⁷ Gamble specifically identified an interest in a formal debrief session with the NMA. He expressed surprise that the development of *Wentworth Basin Bytes* was underway prior to the Echuca launch and felt he had useful advice to contribute to future projects (JW Field Journal Entry, 21.05.2004, Melbourne). I also discussed the nature of the evaluation feedback and reporting process with him during the post conference interview. Gamble reflected:

"I wish I could have read your talk before the start of the project. I almost felt like I missed the point and the paper clarified things for me. It gave me the opportunity to think about what I was doing" (JW Field Journal Entry, 21.5.2004, Melbourne).

⁶⁷ The conference paper (Wills et al., 2004) linked the *Basin Bytes* concept to the Photovoice methodology (see Chapter 2 and 3). I asked Gamble to contribute his experience as a facilitator to presentation – to contribute to Gamble's professional development – and was supported by the CTP Research Team. There were several key outcomes from Gamble's involvement – he was approached by a colleague from the Shepparton Art Gallery regarding future community art projects, he felt a sense of achievement at presenting at a conference, and there was greater interest in the project by members of the audience as his participation bought a community voice to an industry conference.

6.3.6 Echuca Basin Bytes: participatory dimensions

As an activity-based museum outreach project, one can argue that *Echuca Basin Bytes* met the NMA's objectives of engaging young people in a collection and documentation-based project, developing ICT tools with the capacity to facilitate digital collecting, and developing online community exhibitions.

From a participatory perspective, however, the project must also be considered in relation to the way the various stakeholders perceived and experienced the project, not just in relation to the fulfilment of project developer goals. Several potential participants dropped out of the project before it began because the cameras were not available when the project was being promoted. These delays generated participant discontent and the project became more of an imposition than a pleasure.

The project parameters were pre-designed, but not pre-tested. There was considerable discussion amongst NMA staff and *CTP* research members as to whether or not to call this a pilot project. Blackshaw was opposed to this terminology because he felt it was "almost treating them like guinea pigs" (Blackshaw, 2003. Public Programs Manager interview, 01.05.2003). However, the untested nature of the database meant that Echuca participants, even though they enjoyed the project, felt as though they were part of a test run. One participant reflected:

I think in a few more years this will be an absolutely great project and I would have loved to do it ... when it's fully structured and ready to go. This year it was really sort of a test run (Picone, 2003. BBE Audio Journal Transcript 10.12.2003).

Specific evaluation question 1

- *How were participatory and community engagement principles and practices used effectively in the execution of this project?*

Community cultural development

Community cultural development principles were central to Blackshaw's approach and vision for the project. He employed a flexible approach to project development and demonstrated an ability to adapt to different issues as they developed. This meant the project had room to evolve to community, participant and facilitator needs as they arose. However, as the project progressed Blackshaw recognised that his vision was not always achievable because of the project limitations:

I had a vision of the participants all in one room together ... with the facilitator and they were looking at the project together and how it would look on the website. And they would be putting some proposals together for the design – which images would tell the story... etc...

Well, it didn't unfold like that because the kids weren't available. They never met at one point for a start and there was a whole variety of things that occurred that prevented that from happening. (Blackshaw, 2004. NMA Public Programs Manager interview, 03.02.2004).

Gamble also applied a CCD approach to the way he facilitated the project. He encouraged participants to use the project to help them address issues of self doubt, confidence, belonging and emotions, and thus use creativity to foster feelings of self worth and well-being. He was sensitive to the impact his presence had on the participants. Half way through the project, for example, he noticed a difference in participants' confidence levels, and was aware that the girls communicated more openly when I attended the workshops. He wondered on whether or not having a female present made these young women feel more comfortable or safe and endeavoured to maintain a comfortable working environment during these meetings (JW Field Journal Entry 16.12.2003, Melbourne).

Action research and utilization focused/creative evaluation

Echuca Basin Bytes provided the both CTP Research Team and me with a rich source of data for analysis and reflection. I worked with Blackshaw and Gamble and this helped me keep abreast of project developments and changes, and provide ongoing feedback and advice. As Gamble was not part of an organisation and was working from home, he was pleased to have had regular contact with me in my capacity as evaluator. Problems and delays however caused him a level of anxiety. This required adapting my research methodology as it was not always appropriate to tape discussions. Therefore I adopted a more informal approach in response to this situation. He found the opportunity to reflect and vent his frustrations useful, and reflected that the interaction was creative – it provided an opportunity to solve a number of problems, particularly when he wasn't able to contact Blackshaw (JW Field Journal Entry, 21.05.2004, Melbourne).

This strong communicative relationship blurred the boundaries between the traditional 'impartial observer' role of evaluation and the creative/utilization-focussed/constructivist evaluation that Patton (1981, 1997) and Guba & Lincoln (1989) advocate. For example, emails to Blackshaw after field trips often 'caught' problems before they eventuated. I also provided feedback to the CTP research team and Blackshaw via a PowerPoint 'postcard' that integrated images, observations and reflections (Appendix K). Blackshaw noted that the evaluation interviews were really the only time he got to stop and reflect on the project.

These blurred boundaries also reflected the interaction I had with the participants. Despite clearly articulating the difference between my role as project evaluator and the *Basin Bytes* project itself, many of the participants saw me as a representative of the NMA. They asked for curatorial assistance and opinions about their work, and enjoyed having face-to-face contact with someone they thought was an NMA representative. I was mindful of not guiding the content of their projects, however, not helping them would have been counter to the principles that underpin the project.

Working with the participants was difficult as there were no formal workshops, and contact time was minimal. I adopted a flexible and interactive approach which

enabled me to work informally with participants and use the audio diaries. It was apparent that engaging the participants required more direction than simply presenting them with a theme and asking them to develop images. Face-to-face communication played an important role in developing and contributing to the project development.

Community selection

The method of community selection could have been improved by developing a project-based community engagement strategy. This could have been a model for future NMA community-based projects. By giving communities greater lead time to integrate projects into their strategic planning, the NMA could develop stronger and more fruitful partnerships with the wider community. Pagram contextualised the local council working environment as one of strategic planning and outsourcing. Thus, while supporting the concept of *Basin Bytes*, she was not able to commit resources to it in a short timeframe (Pagram, 2003. *Pers. Comm.*).

Specific evaluation question 2

- *In what ways did the principles of access, creativity, diversity, inclusion and learning manifest in the project?*

Access

Although the project gave the facilitator and participants' access to a major cultural institution, technical problems significantly affected their ongoing engagement with the project. Tools and equipment could have been developed quickly if they had been given priority, and if there was greater appreciation of the impact delays would have on participants' engagement. By the time the cameras were returned and they were informed that the launch would be held over until 2004, many of the participants were not interested in the final product.

Creativity

Most participants experimented with the video facility of the camera; and some were disappointed they were not able to use this in their project. Further, there was no opportunity for participants to creatively customise their web galleries, or be involved in the design layout and concept.

Diversity

As the project was predominantly school-based and the workshops did not prevail, there was no chance for participants to interact with different people. This meant that one of the NMA's major goals to run the project with a range of people outside the schools network did not occur (see Appendix H).

There was no interaction with or discussion of Indigenous issues in relation to land use and cultural heritage. This is interesting, particularly when one reflects that individuals from Yorta Yorta group, such as Monica Morgan, have been particularly active in land management and cultural heritage issues (Morgan, 2006).⁶⁸

Some of the project content was peripheral to the specific environmental and MDBC issues that were anticipated. Too much control of content, however, would impact the participatory dimensions of the project. Diversity in content also reflects the social realities of working with communities.

Inclusion

The NMA's strategy to work with youth outside the schools arena did not eventuate. Instead, the project connected with another community of interest – those in school. A more inclusive recruitment approach could have been developed, one that gave participants the chance to express interest rather than being chosen by teachers. As it stood, however, teachers selecting participants compromised the intention for participants to be self selecting.

Gamble's experience as a freelance arts worker was representative of issues facing workers without institutional backing, framework and resources. Thus while hired by the NMA, and tentatively supported by the local council, Gamble felt

⁶⁸. Monica Morgan is a researcher with the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, and former Manager of the Basin Communities including Indigenous Partnerships Programs for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission during 2003 to 2005. Interestingly, in one of the other projects the CTP research team evaluated, the Riverhealth Conference, a 17 year old Koori boy read an excerpt from a story he wrote that expressed his deep connection to Echuca that was linked to his Aboriginality, extended family and cultural traditions. Clayton Murray-Mitchell's story is available on the ABC *Heywire* website (2003).

somewhat isolated in his role as facilitator. Rather than being central to a dynamic project, he experienced frustration and disconnection.

Learning

Difficulties bringing together all participants and problems with the database meant learning about specific curatorial skills was limited. Further, many of the Echuca participants were minors and less confident in their approach to skill development. Some of the participants also highlighted problems that echoed earlier NMA concerns – many found the database and interface somewhat dull and unengaging, others felt that the fields needed to be more clearly articulated, while some simply wanted more room in which to write their story.

If one draws on Falk & Dierking's (2000) 'contextual model of learning', it is evident that a range of problems in the different contexts (personal, sociocultural, spatial and temporal) combined to create overall learning difficulties for the participants. Further, one could suggest that participants' stories reflect aspects of Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of multiple intelligences. Butcher's water skilling shots and interest in short films, for example, clearly demonstrated an interest in movement, while Picone's interest in design reflected the spatial and visual learning style.

Specific evaluation question 3

- *Was there potential for museums to learn from participatory models used in other disciplines?*

NRM

Greater engagement with NRM agencies in the area may have generated more NRM-related project content. Engaging with a community of practice with specific interests would also have encouraged a more participatory approach to the development of project tools and consultation regarding their use and effectiveness.

Photovoice

Although Photovoice was not a driving philosophy behind the project development, greater understanding of the capacity for photography to stimulate engagement in community activities could have attracted different types of participants. The importance of developing community outcomes from participant engagement is central to Photovoice projects, via exhibitions, publications and so forth, and greater attention to the project process and product could have created greater learning opportunities and outcomes.

Specific evaluation question 4

- ***How did face-to-face communication help?***

Despite the ICT format of this project, the face-to-face aspect of developing relationships with community groups was crucial to this project. ICT tools do not replace this; they facilitate another type of interaction. It is important for museums to have a 'face' connected with a community project. Face-to-face engagement was also crucial for the evaluation research. This gave Gamble a chance to share his experiences, and the sense that the project warranted attention.

Facilitator and project developer (and curatorial) discussions during the induction period were extremely beneficial. This could have been improved if Blackshaw had been able to visit Gamble in Echuca to understand the working environment. Blackshaw acknowledged his heavy workload gave him limited interaction with Gamble and that he "probably would have liked in some ways ... Maybe I'll be more of a hands-on manager for this from the museum's point of view" (Blackshaw, 2004. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview, 03.02.2004). This is interesting because it echoes the more structured approach that museums use and that Cunningham discussed at the beginning of the project.

6.4 Wentworth Basin Bytes

The second *Basin Bytes* project was run in Wentworth, NSW during 2004 (see Table 6E). It was informed by the evaluation research conducted for the Echuca project, and was modified accordingly.

Phase	Date
Preparing and developing the project	Oct 2003 – Jan 2004
Engaging and inducting project facilitator	February 2004
Engaging participants	February 2004 – March 2004
Running the project	March 2004 – June 2004
Finalising the project: website and local launch	25 June 2004
Institutional debriefing, my reflections and analysis	2004-2006

Table 6E: Project timeline: *Wentworth Basin Bytes*.

Wentworth, in the south western corner of NSW, is famous for being the location of the confluence of the Murray and Darling Rivers (see Figure 6.22).⁶⁹ The town is part of the broader Wentworth Shire, which covers an area of 26,000 square km and has a population of approximately 8,000. The landscape:

can be ... arid and harsh ... or ... soft and serene in solitude. It is a land of rivers, creeks and lagoons; of windmills, bores and waterholes. There are miles and miles of saltbush, acacia, casuarina and mallee, wide flat plains, drifting desert sands, red roads and cobalt blue skies (Wentworth Shire Council, 2004: website).

Major towns within the shire include Wentworth, Dareton, Buronga, Avoca, Gol Gol and Pooncarie, but the closest commercial town is Mildura, which is located on the other side of the Murray River in Victoria. This fertile corner of the NSW is also called Sunraysia, and is well known for its vineyards, citrus farms and dried fruit industries. Wentworth also has an active arts community and events program, including the Wentworth Art Festival and the Sweat Box Art Competition⁷⁰, and is part of Regional Arts NSW's West of the Darling region.

⁶⁹ The Murray and Darling Rivers are Australia's two longest rivers.

⁷⁰ The Sweat Box Art Competition involves recycling the region's iconic wooden fruit boxes and making furniture and sculptures. These boxes were used to transport direct fruit to vineyards and packing sheds, and were often made into makeshift furniture (Wentworth Arts, 2004).

Wentworth Basin Bytes: Location in the Murray-Darling Basin



Figure 6.22: Wentworth, NSW in relation in the Murray-Darling Basin. [Photograph: David Eastburn (MDBC, 2001: vi): "Wentworth at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers". [Map courtesy MDBC, 2005: website].

6.4.1 Preparing and developing the project

Wentworth Basin Bytes benefited substantially from the learning and experience of the first project. As noted in section 6.2.3, even the choice of Wentworth came about during discussion of the Echuca project.

Upon agreeing to participate in the project (after consultation with Broken Hill-based regional arts worker, James Giddey), the Wentworth Shire Council assigned local NRM practitioner, Kim Field, to be the *Wentworth Basin Bytes* facilitator. Field's work at the local council involved developing a wet and dry regime as part of the Thegoa Lagoon Management Strategy.⁷¹ Her position as a council employee was a sharp contrast to Gamble's CCD background and freelance status.

6.4.2 Engaging and inducting the project facilitator

Both Field and Giddey attended the NMA induction session. Giddey had agreed to act as a mentor to Field as she facilitated the project. Field was 21 years old at the time she became *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Facilitator, and was keen for Giddey to watch over the more creative and technical dimensions of the project.

Tour of NMA's *Tangled Destinies* Exhibition⁷²

NMA Curator, Mat Trinca, gave Field and Giddey a tour of the *Tangled Destinies* (since renamed *Old New Land*) Gallery. This reflected Field's NRM background, and related more tangibly to the NRM dimension of the project. Curatorial discussions were not as dynamic as those during Gamble's induction, possibly because Field was not as cognisant of the different museological issues involved. Further, as Giddey was assisting with this cultural dimension of the project Field felt she could discuss any issues or problems with this with him as required. Unlike Gamble, therefore, she was not dependent on guidance from NMA staff.

Evaluation interview

Giddey was aware of the evaluation research, having discussed the overall CTP research project with CTP researchers in Broken Hill in 2003. He had a clear

⁷¹ Thegoa Lagoon is a small lagoon on the outskirts of Wentworth. It is affected by the different levels of water in the river and wet and dry management regimes regulate water levels to keep the lagoon sustainable.

⁷² The NMA's *Tangled Destinies* Gallery has been renamed *Old New Land*.

understanding of the evaluation component of the project and had informed Field of this research prior to their visit. Field discussed aspects of the project and its evaluation with me and indicated she had a clear sense about she was trying to achieve. This was partly due to the clear communication she had received from Giddey and Blackshaw, and partly as a result of being the second *Basin Bytes* project. She aimed to focus the project towards place, water themes and environmental engagement:

I want to get the volunteers, the committee, involved in the actual area. A lot of people around Wentworth, they go to work, they come home – it's all they do, it's what their life consists of. They don't think about what we can do to better our community.

I want to get them involved in their environment, basically. A lot of people aren't involved in that sort of thing in Wentworth ... but then there are people that do care and can't get involved in it (Field, 2004. BBW Facilitator Interview, 03.02.04).

Field noted her biggest concern was her lack of artistic experience, but felt this gap was adequately catered for via Giddey's participation (Field, 2004. BBW Facilitator Interview 03.02.2004). She also recognised the value of council support. As an employee, she was able to rely on public relations and ICT personnel to assist with advertising and equipment, and had access to council facilities, computers and vehicles.

Giddey was philosophical about the potential for the project and the fact that he had been eager to run it in Wentworth. He wanted to assess the project for his own purposes, noting that a potential outcome could be continuing the project with communities along the Darling River. His initial attraction to the concept reflected his sense that different places evoke a particular type of language and discussion:

Wentworth is right on the edge of the desert, and there's this very, very thin strip along the river that is green. And it is part of their psyche, most of the conversation has to do about the river. [If] you go out to Wilcannia, 80% of the population is Indigenous so therefore the talk is about that. In Menindee it's quite different – it's surrounded by water but most of the time that water is undrinkable. Broken Hill, again, is quite a different language. I think the river – the two rivers at Wentworth – really influence the ... psyche of the whole place (Giddey, 2004. BBW Facilitator Mentor Interview 03.02.04).

Like Field, Giddey was interested in understanding how the evaluation would be part of the project, but was particularly interested in how participants would respond to and adapt the evaluation research.

Even at this early stage, both Giddey and Field identified the possibility of launching *Basin Bytes* as part of the Wentworth Arts Festival in June 2006. Early

planning gave the project momentum. From a participatory perspective, however, this planning meant it was being driven very much by the facilitators as opposed to the needs of the participants.

ICT

The ICT induction highlighted Giddey's understanding of digital cameras and his ability to assist Field with this part of the project. ICT staff gave Field and Giddey an overview of the templates for website development and the discussion clarified the dimensions of the website template system (Echuca was still being developed at this stage). Giddey felt more creative and flexible parameters would have enhanced the look and feel of the site and, therefore, contributed to participant learning.

6.4.3 Engaging participants

During the induction interview, Field noted she had already identified four potential participants via her NRM connections. On her return to Wentworth, she contacted a range of local media and local government organisations to solicit further interest in the project. This included an interview on local radio, putting an advertisement in the local paper and getting the local council journalist to write an article for the local paper.

Participants included two of Field's personal friends and her twin sister. Again, therefore, the project leader had a direct impact on the types of participants engaged in the project. One woman found out about the project from the local employment office while another was eager to be involved so she could learn about digital photography. At 65 she fell outside the target audience group, however, her determination not to be excluded by age prompted Field to discuss this issue with Blackshaw. They agreed that anyone expressing interest should be included and, at the end of the project, there was also a strong consensus from all participants that the project should not be restricted to a specific age group as the project had the capacity to facilitate shared learning from people with a range of different backgrounds and skills (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

A local teacher also contacted Field with the intention of engaging her students in the project. Although this did not eventuate, she became a participant herself and Field visited her school to give the students an overview the project:

Kim actually came into my class last Thursday and showed my students photos and talked about the project. That also enabled me to get up to date with what I needed to do but ... it was beneficial for me and my students as well (Mars, 2004. BBW Audio Journal Transcript).

Despite receiving enquiries from both males and females, all project participants were women. During the final workshop focus group, participants reflected about the absence of males, something that also prompted Giddey to think about whether this would be different if the project was conducted in Broken Hill. He felt it would and discussed this issue with the participants:

Participant 1:

If it had been based in the city, I think we may have got males. But in the country I'm looking at the males that I grew up with ... if I ever discussed the topic of what I was doing it was only ever their partner or the females ... that ever stayed listening. Most of the males ended up turning off ... probably some of the older males listened, but definitely none of the young.

Participant 2:

It shows that country blokes are not very cultured!

(Lots of laughter, partly because Giddey was feigning surprise).

Giddey:

Can I make an observation? At Broken Hill a lot of the workshops we give are dominated by males. Which is interesting, coming down here. We ran some projects last September, Coomallalla ... Artstart, three workshops ... A lot of blokes ... wanted to play music, but writing, no blokes at all... It interests me ... down here at Wentworth it is exactly as you say, it's a stereo-typed image.

Participant 3:

Well, [my boyfriend] loved coming out with me, and would say "*why don't you take a picture of this?*", "*why not that?*" But actually coming to a workshop!!! [no chance].(2004. Wentworth Basin Bytes Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

6.4.4 Running the project

Facilitation

Field achieved her aim of getting people to think about environmental issues, and facilitated wider understanding of the project by speaking at a local school, on the radio and by getting her own family involved. She benefited substantially from Giddey's ability to assist with some of the technical and artistic issues that arose during the project, and his enthusiastic participation reflects the potential for arts-based practitioners and NRM practitioners to work collaboratively. Initially, Field was sceptical about the artistic dimension of the project. In her final interview,

however, she expressed a desire to explore the possibility of using creativity in future NRM communication projects and was much more open to the possibilities that arts-based activities could contribute (Field, 2004. BBW Facilitator Interview 02.06.2004).

The workshops, and Field's approach to the project, also helped inspire a sense of confidence in most of the participants in terms of their ability and goals. In her initial interview, Field was nervous that she would not be able to fully explain the project parameters or assist participants appropriately. However, she brought the project to completion by setting achievable goals, being organised, producing a project facilitation pack and having clear deadlines.

As with Gamble, I maintained regular contact with Field and this helped to facilitate aspects of the project development and research. Initially Field was a little intimidated by the evaluation process but noted that the informal manner in which it had been carried out not only helped her, but also put her at ease (Field, 2004. BBW Facilitator Interview 02.06.2004).

Training workshops

In contrast to the first *Basin Bytes*, workshops were built into the Wentworth project from the beginning. This reflected the feedback from Echuca participants as well as Blackshaw's realisation that he had to outline project parameters in more detail during the facilitator induction. The introductory workshop was held at the Wentworth Visitor Centre and aimed to give participants the cameras and a project overview. Field noted there were some delays in getting the cameras and problems with the database:

I thought I'd get the cameras a bit sooner than I did because I only had a couple and I wanted to give them out ... I sort of wanted them to have a bit of a play with the camera before the workshop, I expected that I would have them. I thought that maybe I'd have the cords and the instruction booklets with them but they weren't sent with the cameras. They are supposed to be sent up now but...

I wanted the passwords so that I could show the people the database today but apparently they haven't got that organised and I've got to upload the pictures onto my computer so it could be anytime before we can get them uploaded onto the database (Field, 2004. BBW Facilitator Interview 06.03.2004).

Field gave each participant a small project information pack, and I gave participants a tape recorder and explained the evaluation component of the

project. Giddey used the rest of the workshop to explain functions on the camera and the participants took test shots so as to play with them to gain confidence. During this process, I also spoke to each of the participants to gauge their interest and reason for participating (2004. JW Field Journal Entry 06.03.2004). Providing this information was important. It gave the participants conceptual ideas to take away and think about.

The subsequent workshops were geared towards participants downloading images and discussing their progress. The workshops enabled participants to get a sense of the other stories being developed, and to learn different photographic techniques from each other. Thus they helped to cement participants' engagement in the project, and provided a supportive and collaborative environment. Workshops were also a chance to talk about other activities in the local area, such as an exhibition of illustrations in the local pub addressing the potential death of the Anabranck due to piping, as well as exhibitions and artwork in nearby Mildura. Despite this collegiate environment, the younger participants (14 and 16 year olds) were less confident than the older women in the group. Although they downloaded their images and discussed their stories, they were generally listeners rather than speakers (2004. JW Field Journal Entry 23.05.2004).

Illness prevented Field from running one of the scheduled workshops, however, participants still attended a group meeting. Field's sister, Lee, uploaded the images for participants while another woman discussed project logistics. I engaged people in discussion about issues they were facing at that particular stage of the project and any other curatorial issues that had arisen.

In the final workshop participants finalised their database entries and discussed the launch. I ran a focus group in conjunction with the final workshop to ascertain their feelings about the project at that stage. This joint discussion was most productive and, gave the participants the chance to exchange their ideas and learn in the process of providing feedback.

Technology

Cameras

Participants felt being given a camera was a learning opportunity (see Figure 6.23). However, as some were novices, individual instruction manuals would have greatly assisted their understanding of the equipment and they made particular mention of this in the focus group interview.



Figure 6.23: “I was so thrilled to be given a loan of a Canon digital camera to take photos for this project that I went outside and photographed the sky” (NMA, 2004: website). [Photograph: Jennifer Matthews, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

Participants also felt the facilitator needed more detailed training in the technology and associated programs prior to the project. As a number of them were artistically inclined, they were keen to experiment with the medium of digital photography image. Although Giddey provided some assistance, they were keen for more information and demonstrations. Participants also reflected that it was difficult to get a sense of their images just from looking at the preview screen on the back of the camera. As many did not have upload facilities of their own, and some had eyesight difficulties, they felt it was important for them to see printed images.

Database

At the first workshop, the database did not work. This technical difficulty meant most of the participants were a little confused regarding the database aspect of the project.

It is unclear as to whether the database facilitated an increased appreciation of the need for documentation (although one woman with a history background did mention it in the focus group). Unlike the previous project where the database wasn't working, this time the access issue related to the facilitator. Prior to the first workshop, Field requested sole access to the database. Her decision to assume control of database access was made having seen the process in Echuca where many of the participants hadn't completed the relevant fields of information. By forcing participants to sit with her to upload images, she thought she would have more success with documentation and stories. By the end of the project, however, Field acknowledged that she would give participants' access to the database in future projects. Some participants, for example, needed a more reflective environment in which to create their story and assess their images. Further, for many, time was an issue and they wanted to write their stories straight on to the computer.

Content

Field's NRM background and position at the council dictated her choice of water as the project theme. Some participants expressed a need for a more flexible approach while others wanted the theme to be more specific. The former opinion reflected participants' concerns that material would be too similar; the latter expressed a desire for an interpretive challenge (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004). Key themes included (see Figure 6.24):

- River recreation – fishing, paddle steamers, walking along the riverbank, sleeping by the river bank, dogs playing in the river
- Arts and culture – music, painting
- Community history – built heritage, local stories of place, Lake Victoria
- Salinity
- Native species and loss of habitat
- Water use – lagoon, sprinklers, environmental flows, particularly relating to the Anabranch –an old river channel closely linked to the Darling River.

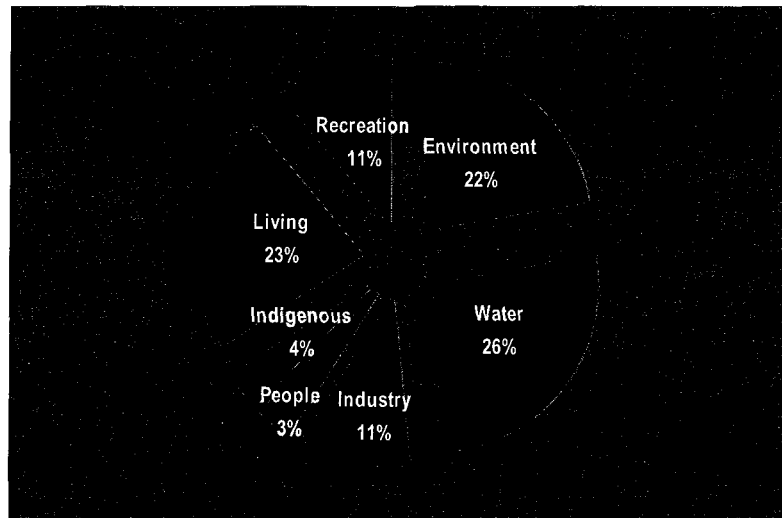


Figure 6.24: *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Thematic Breakdown.

Images

Participants in the Wentworth project used the workshops to discuss image quality and composition. Many were interested in image manipulation, such as recolouring, superimposing images on landscapes and stitching images. Image manipulation raises questions about the significance of the material, particularly for museums' acquisition and collection procedures. For example, the striking image of the marsupial on the eroded river bank in Figure 6.25 was superimposed. As a constructed image, it is more of an interpretive piece than an historical image in its own right – the dynamics of image production have moved into an artistic rather than a documentary milieu. Thus the NMA must consider whether and/or how to communicate the process of project development to those researchers and audiences that engage with its programs.

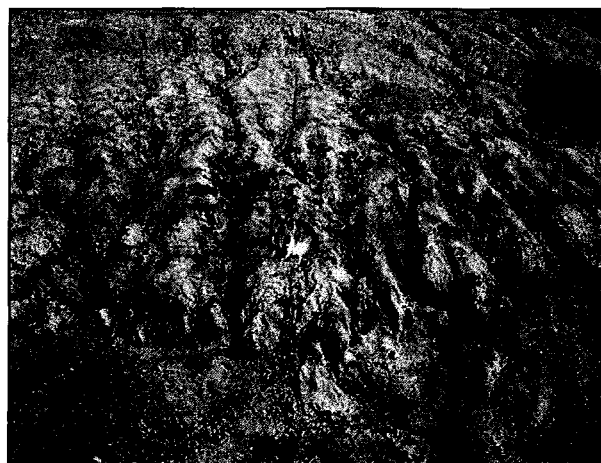


Figure 6.25: Superimposed: "The Environment – Erosion"
[Photograph: Jennifer Matthews, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

There was some potential for confusion if the image was used again unless this manipulation was recorded. Further, it reiterated the need for discussion about how images specifically produced for *Basin Bytes* projects were formally accessioned and assessed for significance.⁷³

Stories

Stories were governed by Field's directions at the beginning of the project. Like Gamble, Field created her own byte, one that focussed particularly on land use around the Thegoa Lagoon area (see Figure 6.26).



Figure 6.26: Land use and Thegoa Lagoon, Wentworth, NSW. Field took the aerial photo from a friend's small plane [Photographs: Kim Field, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* facilitator, 2004].

While some participants chose to explore places in close proximity to Wentworth, others reflected more broadly on issues from other areas. The self-selecting nature of these participants meant that many had an interest and connection with NRM and/or cultural heritage issues prior to the project. This was expressed directly by one participant who had decided to respond playfully to the topic, as it seemed to be almost blatantly obvious that environmental issues needed to be addressed (Mars, 2004. BBW Audio Journal Transcript, no date).

Some of the narratives developed for this project contained controversial information and raised authorship and editorial concerns. One participant discussed issues such as the use of water from Lake Victoria⁷⁴, and opposition to piping water from the Anabranch.⁷⁵ Significantly, she identified and challenged

⁷³ This important issue is discussed in more detail in Section 6.6.

⁷⁴ Lake Victoria is a multi-layered heritage site located near Wentworth which provides significant water storage for the Murray-Darling system. "In 1994, operation of the Lake as a water storage was restricted in response to concerns over damage to significant cultural heritage and Aboriginal burials exposed on the Lake's foreshores. Since that time, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission has spent more than \$8 million on the largest single cultural heritage conservation project in an effort to balance the needs of the Basin's water users, the protection of cultural heritage and minimisation of impacts on the natural environment" (MDBC, 2005: website)."

⁷⁵ The Anabranch follows an old river bed which runs adjacent to the Darling River.

the opinions of a local manager from the Department of Land and Water Conservation regarding this latter issue, an approach that concerned representatives from Murray-Darling Basin Commission in terms of public perception and institutional positioning. Despite the controversy, this story is perhaps one of the best examples that *Basin Bytes* offers to illustrate its value to other project stakeholders, such as the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. Environmental flows are a significant issue for local agricultural communities, Indigenous communities, environmentalists and NRM government agencies within the Basin. The fact that a project provided participants with the opportunity to express their perspective, and that a participant responded, emphasises the value of multidimensional approaches to addressing and discussing this issue. In this particular case, the participant defended her position by saying she used the project to articulate personal impressions and ideas rather than adopting a more formal approach:

I found it good to be able to write the story to each photo and express myself ... my own view, without having to write it like I would a project. Just my own expressions and my own views of each issue (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

Some of the participants wanted to write longer stories to accompany their images, however, the database does not allow for extended narratives. This request represents interpretive and learning dilemmas for the NMA. From a collecting perspective, there is a desire for detailed provenance information. Interpretation specialists, however, argue that too much information or overly long text panels are detrimental to good interpretation (Coxall, 1996; Kently and Negus, 1996; McManus, 1996; Tilden, 1977; Beck and Cable, 2002). Further, because people learn in a range of different ways (Gardner, 1996, 1998), participants' expressing their ideas linguistically should be equally valid as those using images given that there are two components to the project. Thus, some reflection about the way interpretative principles are addressed within the project, and how people respond to them, could benefit future projects.

Jade Temby (age 28)



Figure 6.27: The dry and salty bed of the Anabranh that, Temby argued, many Wentworth residents do not want piped [Photographs: Jade Temby, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

Temby produced a large number of images that specifically addressed water use in a variety of contexts (see Figure 6.27). This included the stories relating to Lake Victoria and to piping the Anabranh, mentioned above. Her stories were questioning and reflective, and despite their controversy, conveyed a sense of urgency and passion about water usage issues in the area.

Maggie Mars (age 50)

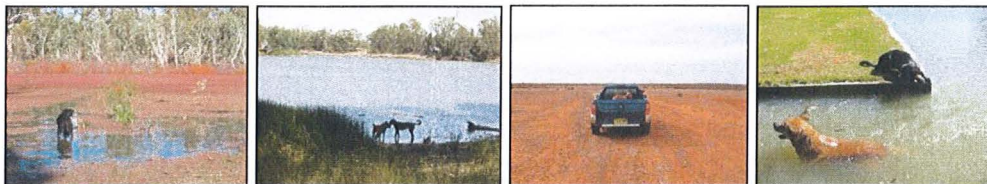


Figure 6.28: Challenging the myth of the Australian work dog – the ‘urban river dogs’ [Photographs: Maggie Mars, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

Mars chose to look at the way her dogs interact with the environment and to challenge the myth that all bush dogs are farm dogs and workers (Figure 6.28). When asked whether the project increased the way she thought about the environment, her response echoed Blackshaw’s original perception that many community members may already be engaged with and aware of environmental issues:

I think for me it was the opposite. Because we were given that breadth of subject I thought well I’m going to treat it using the rivers as a plaything. Ordinarily I am very green and environmentally aware and those sorts of things but I deliberately chose almost an opposite viewpoint. [I chose] to look at the river, perhaps, in a different, more fun way. And perhaps, yes, there was that realisation of how much pleasure you actually get from having the water around (Mars, 2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

Jennifer Matthews (age 67)



Figure 6.29: Matthew's exhibition was called *Equilibrium* and her photographs depicted threatened native species in the surrounding area [Photographs: Jennifer Matthews, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

Combining her artistic talent with an interest in native species and environmental sustainability, Matthews produced thoughtful stories and a range of beautiful and creative images (see Figure 6.29):

I've used the *Wentworth Basin Bytes* project to help ... my research towards a solo exhibition at the Mildura Arts Centre in February 2005. I propose to use scientific investigation to bring together the creativity of art and the factual essence of science. My aim is to portray to the viewer the probability of these species becoming extinct (NMA, 2004: website).

Lee Field (age 20)

Field's twin sister, Lee, chose to look at woolsheds in the area to explore a local industry that relies heavily on water (see Figure 6.30). This focus on the cultural and industrial use of water was interesting, and her images depicted a range of the region's built farming heritage. Lee Field created digital collages by layering external shots of the building with inserts of building interiors.

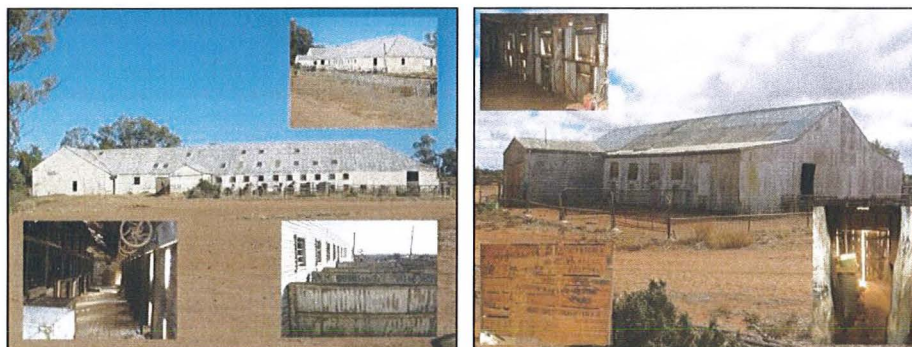


Figure 6.30: Woolsheds in the region: Old Moorna Woolshed (left) and Old Oatbank Woolshed (right) [Photographs: Lee Field, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

Web content

The Wentworth participants benefited from seeing the Echuca galleries on the NMA's website. They were critical of the format and style, noting it appeared overly corporate and boring (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004). Giddey also noted that the site had limited interactivity and contrasted it to artistic webpages which creatively demonstrated artists work in a manner not dissimilar to the Hype Gallery example that Blackshaw identified earlier (see Figure 6.10). A number of the women suggested the possibility of including more information on the website – they were keen for web pages to include multiple levels of information and function as a resource as well as a gallery (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

In the final workshop, participants were anxious that their images and stories would be displayed in the correct sequence. Their awareness of this potential problem demonstrated their level of engagement and ownership with regards to the final product. To address these concerns, future projects could incorporate the capacity for a participants' design brief so that the participants can clearly articulate their preferred layout.

Field generated web content for the introductory pages and for each participant. On reflection, she felt it would have been better for participants to write their own introductory statements. Field also hired Temby (a project participant) to design the banner for the website. They were both inspired to take aerial shots of the river and surrounds from a gyrocopter run by a local pilot. Temby then stitched these images together to create the banner (see Figure 6.31).

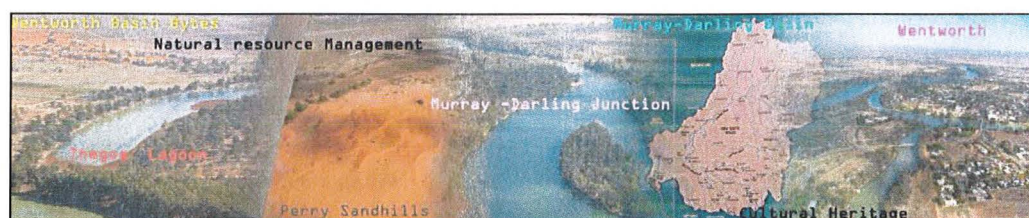


Figure 6.31: Graphic banner for the *Wentworth Basin Bytes* website
[Design: Jade Temby, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participant, 2004].

6.4.5 Finalising the project: local launch, website and exit

As noted above, the project was launched during the Wentworth Arts Festival at the Wentworth Visitor Centre. Piggybacking' on publicity generated by other events, it gave the project a sense that it was a part of the region's activities and thus bigger than a NMA-only focused event. The project was acknowledged in speeches for the Wentworth Art Prize exhibition opening.

Local launch

From the outset, participants approached the project with the intention of a final physical exhibition. During the workshops, they discussed how their images would be viewed in a gallery-type of setting. Thus they had a sense of two audiences: the local community via the local exhibition and the broader community via the webpages. For the local launch, each person undertook to frame, mount and print a number of images for installation in the Wentworth Visitor Centre. In lieu of this, Giddey's assistance in the first workshop in demonstrating the camera settings that allowed the highest resolution images to be captured was most fortuitous. One participant was disappointed because she had not been able to print super-imposed images and this affected her choice of images for the exhibition.

The framed prints and canvases were installed in the Wentworth Visitor Centre on 25 June 2004, accompanied by entries in the Dip Tin Art Competition that forms part of the Wentworth Arts Festival (see Figures 6.32 and 6.33). At least three participants assisted Field with the installation, while others dropped into the centre during the day. One participant brought her Grandma to see the exhibition and she noted it was her first exposure and experience of the internet. The Wentworth Visitor Centre manager also assisted with the installation and was a keen observer of the material presented. Blackshaw and I were also in attendance and helped where necessary. Blackshaw gave those participants that were able to get to the exhibition during the day project certificates.



Figure 6.32: Left to right: Participants Jade Temby and Jennifer Matthews installing images at the Wentworth Visitor Centre, entries in the Dip Tin Art Competition, Kim Field installing images, and James Giddey on a winning entry in the Sweat Box Art Competition [Photographs: Jo Wills, 2004].



Figure 6.33: A sense of achievement: participants with their images in Wentworth Visitors Centre. From to right: Sarah Pollard (left) and Jennifer Matthews (right). [Photograph: Jo Wills, 2004].

Wentworth Basin Bytes ‘piggybacked’ on the festival publicity and was integrated into a broader community context. One of the participants, Jade Temby, based her winning painting in the 2004 Wentworth Arts Prize⁷⁶ on one of the aerial images she took whilst designing the banner for the website (see Figure 6.34).



Figure 6.34: Jade Temby with the aerial photograph she used as the basis for her winning painting in the 2004 Wentworth Arts Prize open section [Photograph: Jo Wills, 2004].

⁷⁶ A painting competition.

Online Exhibition

The development of the online exhibition was relatively smooth, apart from the ongoing problem with the database not functioning as hoped. Having to transfer the images and stories to Microsoft Word document files meant some stories were paired with the wrong image. Fortunately, this issue was identified and addressed during the editing process – only one of the images was displayed incorrectly on the website.

The major issue facing the Wentworth project was the contentious nature of some of the content. Representatives from the MDBC expressed concern about negative comments attributed to a local stakeholder and about the representation of politically sensitive water issues associated with Lake Victoria. NMA curator, Ian Coates, and Blackshaw discussed and resolved this with Alison Reid of the MDBC. They agreed that the material would remain online but that a disclaimer would be placed on the site:

The Wentworth *Basin Bytes* gallery is a community generated website. The stories and opinions expressed here are those of the individual participants and do not necessarily represent the position of the National Museum of Australia or the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. They are presented to inform discussion about the Basin's natural resources (NMA, 2004: website).

This was a positive decision and process: it shows that both institutions are committed to the participatory nature of community projects.

Exit strategy

As in Echuca, there was no formal exit strategy for the project in Wentworth. However, the focus group interview in the final workshop gave the project a sense of completion, as did the strict deadline Field enforced for image uploading and the linking of the project launch with the local arts festival. Most participants noted they were comfortable with the idea of the project coming to an end and were interested in making suggestions for forthcoming projects.

6.4.6 Wentworth Basin Bytes: participatory dimensions

In terms of producing environmental and NRM-related material, *Wentworth Basin Bytes* was more successful than its predecessor. Indeed, a substantial amount of digital material and information was collected that has the potential to form a part of the NMA's collection. However, the NMA needs to articulate a

formal acquisition process for this material. Will material, for example, be acquired individually, or on a project basis?

However, comparison of the participatory dimensions and participants' learning experience is more complex. The physical context in which the project was run was different. Significant variables, such as age, gender, motivation, and time, also had an impact on the outcomes.

Given that the project had, effectively, been trialled in Echuca, technical problems were minimal and this gave participants and Field time to concentrate on the stories and images. Field was also able to learn from and adapt the approach Gamble initially adopted and chose to exercise greater control over project parameters, including database access, dates and themes. At the facilitation level, therefore, there were some barriers to full engagement, which, although unintentional, impacted on participant learning and development.

Specific evaluation question 1

- *How were participatory and community engagement principles and practices used effectively in the execution of this project?*

NRM

NRM issues were used to connect participants to the project and to the local landscape – thus in some ways NRM featured most prominently as a theme or project concept. Field noted that her aim for the project was to increase people's awareness of local NRM issues, and in doing this she drew on an NRM extension approach. One could argue that Aslin & Brown's (2004) notion of engagement is evident in Field's goals and objectives. Her interest was to get people thinking about the local environment by engaging them in an activity.

CCD

Use of arts and creativity featured more strongly in this project than Echuca. This could reflect Giddey's influence on the project, and his interest in using the arts to connect people to environment. Integrating the exhibition opening within the Wentworth Arts Festival also changed the project status and gave participants a sense of engagement and empowerment.

Action research and utilization focused/creative evaluation

Problems and issues identified via the evaluation of *Echuca Basin Bytes* were rectified in *Wentworth Basin Bytes*. This helped ensure a more positive project outcome, and was assisted, in part, by the stricter parameters that were placed around the project. That is, in terms of workshops, a more specific theme and articulated outcomes.

Again, boundaries between facilitator, evaluator and museum became blurred during the project. As the participants and facilitator were interested in the project processes, and as I attended the workshops, they discussed museum issues with me because of my background in the industry. In addition, I also helped facilitate when Field was unwell, which reflected the collaborative atmosphere in which the project was run.

Improvements to the equipment and technology meant the NMA developed more sustainable relationships in this community. Further, Blackshaw attending the launch was positive reinforcement and recognition of the project and their efforts. Despite this, many of the participants still thought that I was a museum representative and wondered why the NMA didn't have a staff member present when it was explained that I represented the University of Tasmania.

Community selection

As outlined above, the process of selecting Wentworth as the participant community was more organic than Echuca, although like Echuca the facilitator did influence the types of participants engaged. Suggestions from a regionally-based representative gave the project credibility, and reflect the importance of using local networks to undertake and generate participatory projects. The interesting issue for this project is that Giddey pitched the project to the Wentworth Shire Council and they identified an NRM-trained facilitator rather than a CCD practitioner. Thus, although there is legitimate concern about the way the concept of "local" is used, and its potential for inequality (Mohan & Stokke, 2000), in this instance localism influenced the project positively.

Specific evaluation question 2

- *In what ways did the principles of access, creativity, diversity, inclusion, and learning manifest in the project?*

Access

Field's status as a council staff member meant she had the backup and support of the council, and access to facilities and services such as cars, printers and publicity. Further, it meant participants had access to her on a regular basis as the project was incorporated into her work schedule. This differed substantially from Gamble's experience in Echuca where he worked as a private contractor.

Field raised the issue of public liability for workshops and participants (Field, 2004. BBW Facilitator Interview, 3.02.04). As a council worker, Field was

covered, however, the NMA resolved to discuss this issue with all future project facilitators.

Although the database was more functional and used more successfully, Field mediated participants' access to it. This meant they had to make an appointment to see Field to upload their work and stories, and many (including Field in retrospect) felt that they needed more time to go through this process, and would have liked direct access. To some extent, therefore, they had minimal opportunity to really engage with the technology.

Creativity

Material created had a strong aesthetic element, but also adhered to the thematic and narrative dimensions of the project. Interestingly, this interest in aesthetics raised some important questions for the NMA, and museums in general. A number of images were digitally enhanced or superimposed onto other images to create a montage or collage.

The format of workshops allowed a collaborative and supportive approach and participants used these forums to discuss their image production techniques, their stories, and also to draw on each other's experiences with the various artistic and technical processes to expand their knowledge.

Diversity

A range of NRM topics was addressed in the project. Some participants took a more journalistic and documentary approach to the task, while others strived to create a visual and written narrative. However, for the most part, diversity did not play out strongly in this project.

Inclusion

Participants joined the project for a number of reasons. These included using photography, getting their partners out into the landscape, a desire to communicate about the cultural heritage in the community, and to tell people about the land in which they live. During the focus group they reflected:

Well for me it's the technology. I've had nothing to do with [it] before, so I've gone mad, absolutely mad, with the digital camera and the tape recorder. If I did it again, I'd probably

do it a little bit differently because I've taken too many of everything ... but for what I'm doing, for research, it's been absolutely amazing (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

I found it good because I'm interested in that sort of thing – NRM and cultural heritage. I actually thought up all my photos beforehand and planned them before I did them, because I knew what general topic I had, once I'd figured it out! (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05..2004).

After the second workshop I think it was ... clearer. The first one I don't think was – well, I left not being 100% sure what I was doing so I just went and took photos. Really, we all came back at the second workshop, looked at everyone's shots and felt the ease that maybe we were all on the right line (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

Not all attempts to engage friends or family were successful. One woman noted that her partner became exasperated when she took too long setting up her photos and constructing the shots (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004). However, the attempts to involve other people in the process illustrate the project's capacity to affect the participants and their social networks.

Field and Blackshaw's willingness to stretch the target age group was an inclusive decision. As noted above, participants approved of this decision – they felt anyone wanting to be part of the project should be given the opportunity. It is useful to speculate, however, on how the broader age group, who were more confident and outspoken, affected the younger participants in the project. Was it helpful or intimidating to be working with an eclectic group of people? Even though no one explicitly raised this as an issue in their taped audio journals, I observed that younger participants were much quieter during the workshops.

Despite the more open age group, and although a range of people with different skills participated in the project, the absence of male participants was noticeable. Was this due to the engagement techniques, the type of project or merely circumstance? Are there alternative ways of promoting the project to entice a broader range of participants? Interestingly, one of the youngest participants noted there were no males in her art classes at school and that she felt getting boys to participate in this type of project would be difficult (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

Learning

The database was not working at the beginning of the project and thus the first workshop missed the opportunity of exploring the curatorial components of the project as a group. Further, Field's decision to be the database 'gatekeeper' limited people's interaction with this technology. Despite this, Wentworth participants were more engaged with the curatorial processes, particularly with regards to storytelling, in both a visual and verbal capacity. This relates, in part, to the learning that was taken from Echuca. In Wentworth, most of the participants were over 18 and thus were keen to explore the dimensions offered to them by this project. Particular attention was paid to the ways audiences would view their material in both an online and non-virtual exhibition context.

Like Echuca, participants would have benefited from instruction manuals to help them explore the potential of the cameras in more depth. They expressed frustration that they, and Field, had a limited understanding of the camera's functions and suggested that more facilitator training prior to the project would be helpful – for the camera and associated software. One participant noted:

To be shown how to use the camera better and to have an instruction booklet – one per person. James [just] showed me how to stitch a photo, right at the end of the project, so if we had a booklet each [imagine what I could do]. (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

The majority of participants were already actively engaged with environmental and cultural heritage issues. This meant that the project enhanced their ideas and gave them an opportunity to explore them in a new media rather than introduce them to a new topic. However, one participant noted:

I did mine on bridges and I probably would never ever have taken the time out to look at them in different ways. I find it really, really unusual that there is very little documentation ... they can't tell me when the bridges were built ... They don't know Tuckers [Bridge], they don't know the exact date for Wentworth [Bridge] over here, and to me that is completely ridiculous. There would have to have been something written down somewhere on these bridges. (2004. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004).

Wentworth Basin Bytes images were redisplayed at the Wentworth Visitors Centre during History Week in September 2004. After the project finished, Field maintained contact with both Blackshaw and I and noted:

We are having another display. Maggie Mars (one of our participants) is involved in History Week from the 11th to 19th September. Maggie has asked if I would display the *Basin Bytes* images again in the info centre. The history week theme is Links, so Wentworth has chosen River Links. Jade and I are going to do some extra displays with

the photos that we took, but haven't used during *Basin Bytes*. I think this is great; it gives us more opportunity to display our work as well as promote the website that will we display on the library's links (Field, 2004. *Pers. Comm.* 13.8.2004).

As in Echuca, the participants' stories and images depicted different learning styles consistent with Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of multiple intelligences. The naturalist intelligence was particularly evident in this version of the project.

Specific evaluation question 3

- ***Was there potential for museums to learn from participatory models used in other disciplines?***

CCD

Blackshaw's CCD background, and Giddey's arts background, meant that CCD principles were integrated into the project. Giddey's involvement in workshop discussions also reflects a CCD approach that would be worth pursuing, and reflects the issue of face-to-face communication mentioned throughout this thesis.

NRM

The MDBC's response to the controversial story and approach to resolution reflects an institution prepared to engage with communities in an open and honest manner. Institutions have to be concerned about a variety of issues, but recognising community projects are about giving the community voice is crucial for the future of participatory projects. For museums, this reflects issues of authorship and authority within museum contexts. Many exhibitions are not 'signed' by the curator, thus creating a sense of the faceless author or, as Gurian (1996: 8) argued, 'a godlike voice of authority'. There is a sense of individual responsibility in this project that comes with the autobiographical nature of the stories and images.

Photovoice

Again, a Photovoice approach to these types of projects would probably have lent the images more authority and given them greater impact. It could, potentially, also have promoted more active participant engagement techniques and wider distribution of the finished products in the community. There is potential that the

images from all projects, for example, could be published as a catalogue or short visual essay.

Specific evaluation question 4

- *Did face-to-face communication help*

Face-to-face contact was, again, crucial to the evaluation component. Blackshaw's attendance at the launch was also important. It gave the project credibility and also contributed the NMA's learning and development. Although Blackshaw's background in CCD meant he had a very good understanding of the issues facing regional communities when mounting exhibitions, his attendance in his capacity as a NMA representative gave him tangible (and NMA-related) material to support his assertions for process and development of future NMA outreach projects.

6.5 Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes

Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes aimed to link two communities at different ends of the Murray-Darling Basin system – South Australia and Queensland. The project began in late 2004, was divided into similar phases as the previous two projects, and was informed by the evaluation research (see Table 6F).

Phase	Date
Project conception and development	August 2004 – November 2004
Project facilitator engaged & induction	December 2004
Engaging participants	January – March 2005
Running the project	January 2005 – March 2006
Joint project meeting in Canberra (new dimension)	30 June 2005 – 1 July 2005
Goolwa local launch	18 November 2005
Toowoomba and website launch	21 April 2006
Post project reflections	2004 - 2006

Table 6F: Project timeline: Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes

Goolwa and Toowoomba have vastly different demographics and topography (see Figure 6.35). The name Goolwa derives from the local Ngarrindjeri⁷⁷ Aboriginal word for ‘elbow’, and refers to the bend in the Murray River near Hindmarsh Island (Linn, 2001). Goolwa “has a population of 7500 people and ... is a historic port with a rich history of local industries connected with the river and the sea” (NMA, 2006: website). Located near the McLaren Vale winery region and at the mouth of the River Murray on Lake Alexandrina, the area is a popular tourist and fishing destination. It is also the gateway to the Coorong National Park and has significant Ramsar wetlands.⁷⁸ Goolwa has two museums – the Goolwa Museum and the Signal Point Interpretive Centre.

The name Toowoomba also has links to local Aboriginal language. It is possible that it was adapted from the word *Tchwampa*, meaning swamp, in reference to the

⁷⁷ The Ngarrindjeri are the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land around Goolwa and the Coorong in South Australia.

⁷⁸ The Ramsar Convention on wetlands was signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971, and is concerned with wetlands conservation, biodiversity and promoting the wise use of wetland areas. A participant from Goolwa, Tim Wilson, tackled this theme in his gallery as the “Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert [near Goolwa] are a wetland of international importance [and] one of the six significant ecological assets of the Murray-Darling Basin” (Wilson, 2005. *Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes* participants).

marshes in the area before it was drained for European settlement (Toowoomba City Council, 2006; Queensland Museum, 2004). With “a population of around 90,000 ... [it] is ... known as the 'Garden City of Queensland' and is the main commercial centre for the fertile Darling Downs region” (NMA, 2006: website). The township is nestled in the hills of the Great Dividing Range – and the surrounding land use is agricultural and peri-urban. Toowoomba has a regional art gallery, the Cobb and Co Museum, and a local historical society research centre.

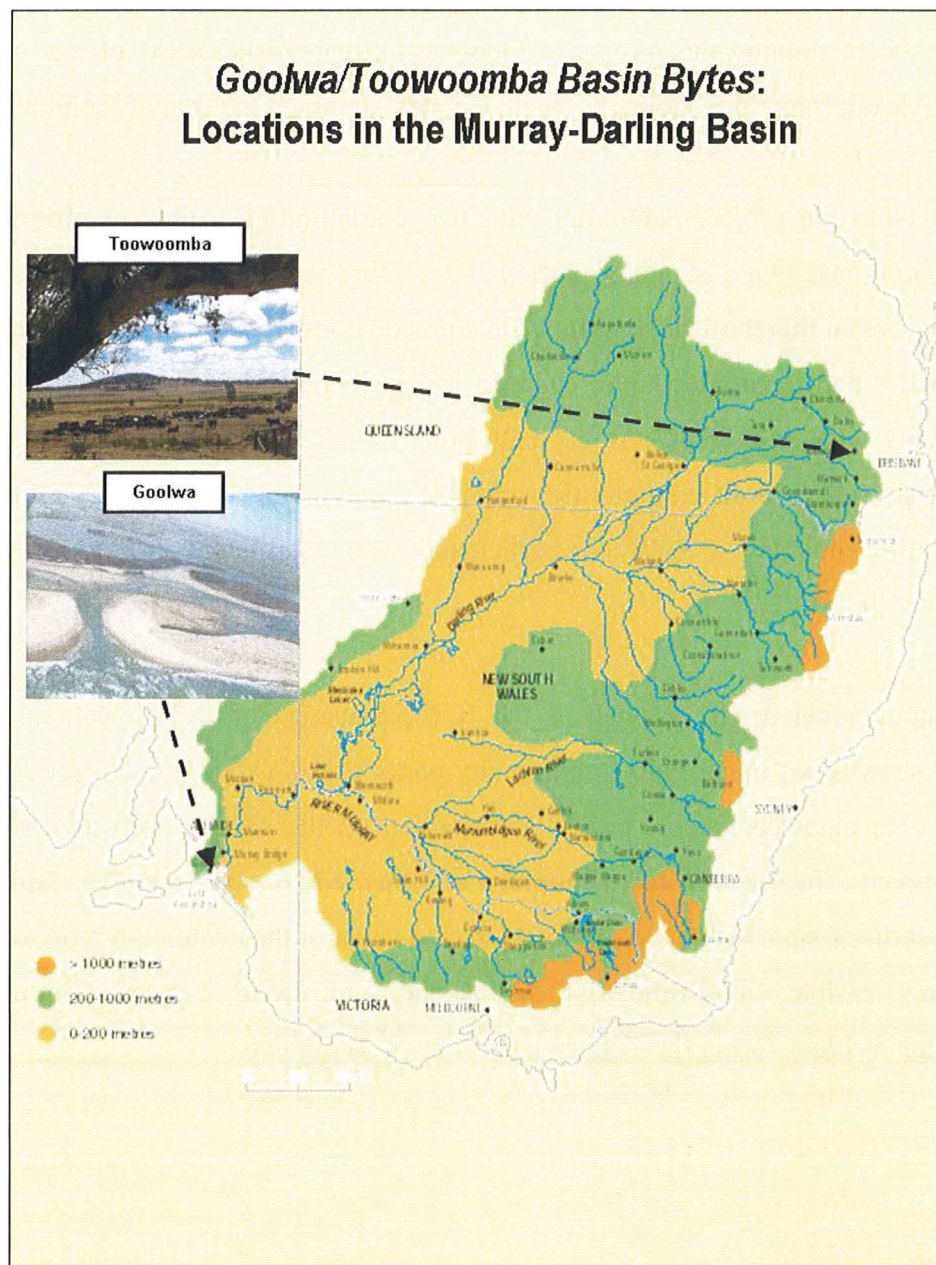


Figure 6.35: Goolwa, SA and Toowoomba, Qld in relation in the Murray-Darling Basin. [Photographs: Paula Hartford, Toowoomba; Tim Wilson, Goolwa, *Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes* participants. Map courtesy MDBC, 2005: website].

6.5.1 Project conceptualisation and development

Although the concept of engaging place-based communities remained central to the third *Basin Bytes* project, the notion of a community of practice was also significant. This was particularly relevant in Toowoomba, where the larger population made soliciting participants from the community at large more complicated. As a result, the Toowoomba Landcare Group was approached to coordinate the project and they assigned a project officer, Marian Stark, as their *Basin Bytes* facilitator. Although a local NRM worker initially expressed interest in running the project in Goolwa, ultimately the NRM officer at the local Alexandrina Shire Council, David Cooney, assumed the role of facilitator.

Apart from the project being run with two communities – thus requiring two facilitators and twice as many participants – there were a number of other key differences in this third *Basin Bytes*. On a practical level, two communities meant the NMA had to provide more cameras and needed more money for facilitator contracts and induction. At a conceptual level, the involvement of two geographically distant communities required a communication strategy aimed at promoting interaction between participants and facilitators in the different communities.

Communication needs, as well as the ICT parameters of the project, inspired Blackshaw to set up an online community portal using Yahoo groups (see Figure 6.36). He intended to post project information on the site, as well as involved participants, facilitators and a number of other NMA staff members alike in project discussion. He also developed the idea to assist the evaluation process as it was not feasible, either time wise, or financially, for me to visit each community as often as I had during the Echuca and Wentworth projects.

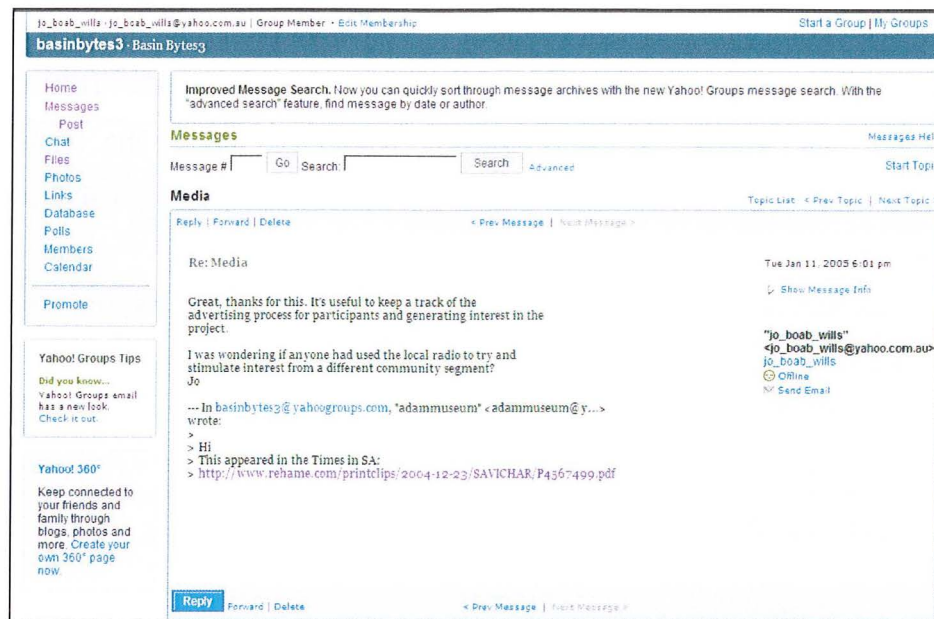


Figure 6.36: A screen shot of the *BasinBytes3* Yahoo Groups Site.

In an attempt to improve the project, and in response to recommendations in the evaluation report, Blackshaw was keen to develop a more engaging and dynamic website. His vision introduced another type of participant into the project – multimedia students from the University of Canberra – who would create short documentaries using the stories and images participants produced. This new dimension was initially hard to grasp, Blackshaw and I continued to use email to clarify and explore complicated issues⁷⁹:

Jo Wills:

[Regarding] ... the interactive documentary process ... are you suggesting that the participants make the documentaries themselves or that students are contracted to work with participants? [I] understand from the fact sheet that if this latter process is used that this will occur once the storytelling process and imagery have been collected, but imagine that the thought process for compiling material for docs will occur as the project unfolds.

Adam Blackshaw:

The process is ... unclear for a number of reasons. The project does not fit in comfortably with the students' curriculum so it cannot be run in parallel. It looks like it needs to be an add-on to their workload. Mitchell was thinking that a shoebox of information with a strong narrative (like a web brief) would be delivered to students who would then work on it. I was hoping that there would be direct engagement between the students and participants (via Yahoo?) so that there is an opportunity to negotiate etc and so some skill transfer happens for participants and students get some experience in 'community-based work'. This is still my ideal. Mitchell and I need to discuss this further (2005. Blackshaw and Wills, *Pers. Comm.* 01.12.2005).

This project was developed after the *Basin Bytes Evaluation Report* (2004) had been submitted. The report recommended that the NMA pay attention to the face-

⁷⁹ The email is also representative of the type of interaction Blackshaw and I maintained throughout each of the *Basin Bytes* projects.

to-face aspects of engaging communities in collaborative projects. As a result, project developers planned for greater involvement in the project.⁸⁰ This altered the nature and practice of the evaluation research. Further, the evaluation framework determined new research questions were appropriate for this project and included:

- How effectively are the communities connected via technology (online chat site, video conferencing, email)?
- Are there similarities between the types of topics or information that the participants create?
- How does having an additional presentation dimension affect the participants' interest and engagement in or understanding of the project?
- How does having an additional presentation dimension affect the reception of the material by different audiences? (2005. Evaluation Framework Document *Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes* 1801.2005).

6.5.2 Facilitator induction

Both facilitators travelled to Canberra for the project induction, to discuss communication strategies and to confirm contractual arrangements. The majority of the induction comprised discussing ideas for developing an online community (as discussed in 6.5.2) and discussing the NRM issues inherent in each place. Both Cooney and Stark visited the NMA galleries on their own while the other was being interviewed for the evaluation research.

Evaluation interview

Both facilitators articulated clear goals for their involvement in the project. The difference in these goals reflected the relative size and nature of their constituent communities. Cooney's approach to get a representative sample of the whole Goolwa region reflected his holistic definition of community:

I see the idea of a community and environment as being overlapped. A lot of people seem to separate it, to want community programs separate to environment programs. It's important to think about the impact we make, the impacts as a community and as individuals. Environmental work is not just putting in trees and putting in ... it's about getting people to recycle, to turn off lights, to realise that in our coastal environment we have to rationalise how many spots we have to park and to think about it before we go to the beach. We need to start looking at what the community does and modifying that. If that means planting trees for some groups, that's really good. If it means for other groups photocopying on both sides ... it's all part of it (Cooney, 2004. GBB Facilitator Interview 07.12.2004).

⁸⁰ This included a representative from the MDBC, Alison Reid, who participated in the first workshop in Goolwa.

Prior to the induction, Cooney compiled a list of key themes for the project, and included history and heritage, fishing, irrigation, wetlands, youth, and senior citizens. He emphasised the need for Indigenous representation and the importance of getting a range of people involved. Cooney's interview also highlighted his engagement in the local community – even at this early stage he had identified potential participants (again, introducing the idea of bias re participant selection). Further, his vision for the participants was to install them as thematic facilitators and to encourage them to involve a range of other people in the development of the stories (Cooney, 2004. GBB Facilitator Interview 07.12.2004).

Stark aligned her project objectives to the aims of the Toowoomba Landcare Group, and thus had a different focus to that outlined by Cooney. She was keen to use the project to attract families of current Toowoomba Landcare Group members as a way to get them involved. Although the group's motto is 'get your hands dirty', they thought a different medium might inspire engagement in future NRM projects, particularly those relating to the area's peri-urban land use. As a formal and incorporated community group, Stark also underscored their aspirations to link to other areas within the Basin. She noted the group was prepared to pay for Toowoomba participants to fly to Goolwa to participate in the first workshop because the notion of making links fitted the group's objectives (Stark, 2004. TBB Facilitator Interview 07.12.2004).

During this first interview, Stark also discussed the nature of landcare employment, and that short term contracts made it hard to plan too far into the future (Stark, 2004. TBB Facilitator Interview 07.12.2004). These comments reflected her position with the Toowoomba Landcare Group and foreshadowed an issue that was to become a major stumbling block for the Toowoomba project.

6.5.3 Engaging participants

Both facilitators had fixed ideas about what they wanted to achieve and who would be best to make this possible. As a result they hand-picked the participants and invited them specifically to meetings. This changed the nature of participation

– those selected had different obligations, motivations and expectations from those people responding to project advertising.

In an interim project overview to Blackshaw and the CTP research team, I provided information about the types of participants chosen once I had attended workshops in each location (see Figures 6.37 and 6.38).

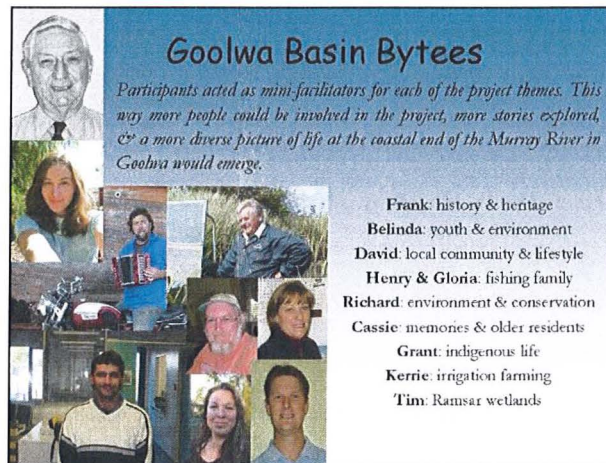


Figure 6.37: Participants from Goolwa, SA [Wills, 2005. Postcards from the Basin: Goolwa/Toowoomba – see Appendix K].

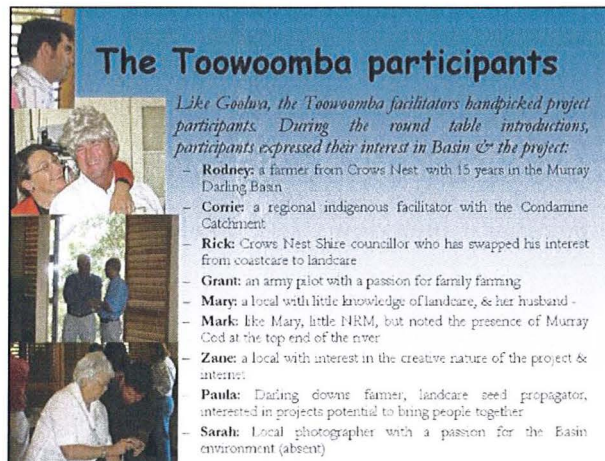


Figure 6.38: Participants from Toowoomba, Qld. [Wills, 2005. Postcards from the Basin: Goolwa/Toowoomba – see Appendix K].

6.5.4 Running the project

Running two projects simultaneously was more difficult than initially anticipated. In many respects, the projects ran as single-place projects, and links between the communities were made after the event and at a managerial level. At the beginning there were a number of attempts to promote collaboration at a formal

level. This included facilitators attending the preliminary workshops in both regions. However, Blackshaw noted that it was up to the facilitators to manage the ongoing communication. Midway through the project he reflected:

I guess one of the things I tend to do is be a bit too open ... and flexible ... I like to think it gives them more opportunity for them to show leadership and take a role ... maybe I could reel it in a bit and impose some of those restrictions around it – maybe that would be of benefit (Blackshaw, 2005 NMA Public Programs Manager Interview 01.07.2005).

Blackshaw's desire to develop interactive documentaries on the website did not come to fruition due to timing difficulties for the University of Canberra. Further, both facilitators experienced difficulties accessing the online discussion forum, at the beginning of the project. As a result, this medium was barely used.

Training Workshops

What was noticeable in the preliminary workshops was the presence of the project developers, NMA staff members, Blackshaw and curator Matthew Higgins, and (in Goolwa) MDBC representative, Alison Reid (see Figures 6.39 and 6.40). From my perspective, having NMA staff present meant that the facilitators took a step back from articulating the project parameters and relied on Blackshaw, in some ways, to 'sell' the project to the participants. Higgins outlined the curatorial parameters of the project in considerable detail, giving examples and engaging in discussion. This was a marked change from the other two projects and firmly established the project's interpretive dimensions and potential. Further, with NMA staff present, my role became much more observational.



Figure 6.39: Blackshaw, Higgins, McKee, Cooney and Reid in Goolwa [Photograph: Jo Wills, 2005].

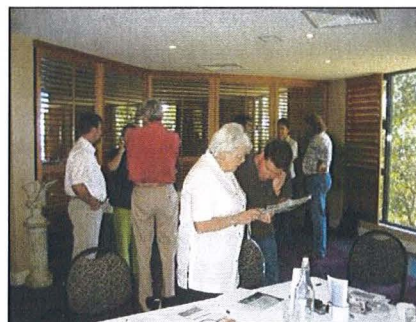


Figure 6.40: Participants discussing the project at the first workshop in Toowoomba [Photograph: Jo Wills, 2005].

It was also apparent in both Goolwa and Toowoomba that the project had evolved to include a range of age groups and was no longer geared solely towards a youth participant base. Further, although Stark mentioned bringing participants from Toowoomba to Goolwa for the first workshop, this did not eventuate. Indeed,

work schedules meant Stark was unable to attend the workshop and thus Toowoomba Landcare Group Chairperson, James McKee, attended in her stead. Thus the objective to get participants from both communities to interact with each other did not work as envisaged.

Cooney noted he had struggled to maintain the participants' interest in the project and had to do much more work than he originally imagined. He explained:

the workshop where we had 4 people we had a fair bit of that going on, people quizzing each other, looking at each other's work and making suggestions.
[But] I wouldn't bother anymore with workshops. I thought if we did it that way ... we could project everything up on the wall so people could see things, but it just didn't fit in. People are busy doing other things. So chasing people up individually has been what I've had to do, which has been more effective but means I've had to do things a number of times instead of once or twice. So that was something I hadn't anticipated (Cooney, 2005. GBB Facilitator Interview, 01.07.2005).

McKee and Stark had divided the participants into two groups to streamline the facilitation. McKee noted that while they had not had formal workshops, they both knew the members of the group and so informal contact was easy. He felt feedback he had from participants was positive.

Facilitating links between Goolwa and Toowoomba

Both Cooney and McKee noted that making links between the participants in either place was a difficult task. Further, there was limited interaction at a facilitator level, apart from the organised meeting at the NMA in August 2005.

Cooney noted participants in Goolwa were:

All aware that somehow it is going to be put together ... to reflect the top and bottom ... but ... it's hard because on the one hand you don't want to stifle the direction that the participants want to go in, however, if there were some sort of direction given to them it would probably make the overlap easier ... But ... if you do that, how much of it is theirs and how much of it is them doing something as somebody else sees it? (Cooney, 2005. GBB Facilitator Interview, 01.07.2005).

McKee also noted this issue of contact was problematic and determined to actively facilitate links between participants:

Getting them interested in what is happening at the other end of the Basin without them physically going there is not the easiest of exercises. But I have seen in about 4 or 5 of the participants, an acknowledgement of interest in seeing what the Goolwa photos were. ... My feeling is that once the database is up, and especially as we've linked by themes not just by location, there will be an interest because people will want to go and see their own photos there and will look at other people with a common theme or interest. I think at that stage, lights will go on for some of those people (McKee, 2005. TBB Facilitator Interview, 01.07.2005).

Technology

Cameras

No major problems with the cameras, although a couple of Goolwa participants were frustrated that the batteries ran out too quickly. This problem had arisen for some participants in Wentworth, while others only used one set of batteries.

Database

The database worked at both initial workshops and for the participants. There was, however, still some confusion about the difference between stories and description.

Yahoo groups' discussion board

As noted above, this was not successful in making links between the two communities. Indeed, it was not even mentioned in either of the workshops.

Content

In the interim project meeting, Blackshaw, Higgins, McKee, Cooney and I spent a considerable amount of time discussing how the material already collected would be organised. Higgins led this discussion on themes (most of which reflected the themes Cooney outlined his initial interview) (see Figure 6.41):

- Indigenous life
- Industry – fishing, irrigation, cattle
- Environment – landcare, landscape, Ramsar, escarpment, flora and fauna, seascape;
- Water – Ramsar, seascape, irrigation, aesthetic;
- Living in the Basin – youth, lifestyle, community, memories, histories, indigenous;
- People – portraits, family;
- Recreation (Wills, 2005. Workshops notes 01.07.2005).

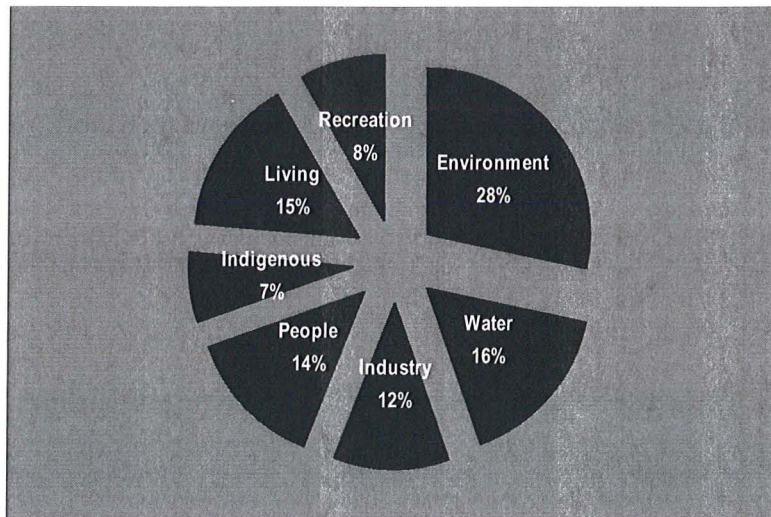


Figure 6.41: *Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes* Thematic Breakdown.

Images

Like the Wentworth participants, some of the Goolwa participants created collages and multi-layered images (See Figure 6.42). Further, a number of Goolwa participants included historic images in their ‘bytes’. This raises the issue of copyright, particularly if the NMA is formally acquiring this material (see Figure 6.43).



Figure 6.42: “Composite picture of cockling”
[Photograph: Henry Jones, *Goolwa Basin Bytes* participant, 2005].



Figure 6.43: A copy of an aerial shot from Goolwa
[Photograph: Tim Wilson (not original), *Goolwa Basin Bytes* participant, 2005].

Stories

As the project was more thematically focussed than the previous two *Basin Bytes*, the content of the stories was predetermined. This resulted in many of the stories being carefully crafted, with participants paying attention to image sequencing as well as the consequences of their narratives. One participant in Goolwa, for example, wanted to examine the negative and positive aspects of environmental management in the area. Cooney reflected: “He didn’t want to promote things as being all rosy, because he has grave concerns for the state the environment, but he didn’t want to downplay the positive things people are doing” (Cooney, 2005. GBB Facilitator Interview, 01.07.2005). Both Cooney and McKee noted that much more follow up was required to secure the material for the Indigenous components of the project.

On reviewing the types of images both groups had compiled, McKee observed that images from Goolwa contained more people than those from Toowoomba. He wondered whether this reflected a different experience of place, or if it perhaps reflected the different community demographics and interests of participants. The holistic and human approach to environmental management fits within the idea of sustainable communities, and as a result there more images of people engaged in activities in *Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes* (see Figures 6.44, 6.45, 6.46).



Figure 6.44: "Football is a big part of country life and Goolwa is no different to any country town. The community comes out in droves to support their team. This year the dry autumn affected more than the region's farmers and natural environment. The lack of rain meant the grounds were very hard, leaving players bruised and grazed after each game, and, many players and supporters believe, leading to some more serious injuries as players landed on what often felt like cement" (Belinda, 2005: NMA website).



Figure 6.45: "Auntie Ellen Trevorrow preparing starters for basket weaving. Much time and effort is put into harvesting freshwater sedges and then the preparation of them as materials for groups at Camp Coorong to use for basket weaving. Now, with the water quality issues salinity and contamination, the sedges (which are freshwater) are becoming harder to find" (Grant, 2005: NMA website).



Figure 6.46: Landcare girls. "The Landcare movement is particularly strong in the Toowoomba region with over 80 Landcare or sub-groups. There have been impressive environmental and conservation gains over the last decade because of this Landcare activity. Nikki and Rachael are enthusiastic and very hard working Landcare officers, who work closely with local leaders such as Glenys Bowtell. Glenys's property is currently in serious drought but the patch of remnant trees around the cattle yards softens the parched reality of the grazing paddocks" (Rodney, 2005: NMA website).

Web content

Participants at the introductory workshop benefited from seeing the Echuca and Wentworth projects online. During the interim project meeting, there was considerable discussion about how the material would be accessed. Blackshaw noted he was commissioning an interactive map of the Basin to act as an introductory page to the NMA's Murray-Darling related projects. However, this would not be available until a later stage in the NMA's website development (Wills, 2005. Workshops notes 01.07.2005).

Although Blackshaw discussed the web banner with participants, he noted that stricter parameters at the NMA meant he had to commission a designer to put this together (see Figure 6.47). This was in contrast to the previous projects where the facilitator and a participant completed this task, and thus indicated a reduction in the participatory dimensions of the project.

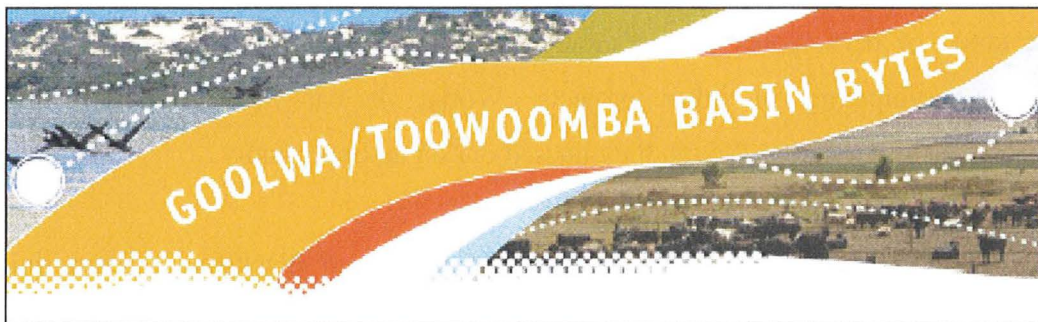


Figure 6.47: A tightening of NMA processes meant development of the graphic banner for the *Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes* was not as participatory as the other projects (NMA, 2005).

Problems

After attending the preliminary workshops in both Goolwa and Toowoomba and distributing the tape recorders, the main contact I had with the project was via email, particularly with Cooney. Stark moved on to work with another Queensland Murray-Darling Basin group, the Condamine Alliance, as her fulltime contract at Toowoomba Landcare Group expired. Similarly, McKee changed jobs mid 2005 and thus both of their competing work priorities meant ongoing

interaction with participants was greatly reduced. Although I maintained email contact with McKee⁸¹, his busy schedule meant interaction was reduced.

As such, one of the major problems in this project was ongoing communication with the Toowoomba component of the project. After the initial workshop, in which participants had expressed delight at having NMA representatives physically present, the project slipped off track. This compromised the timelines and, more importantly, affected the participants' sense of engagement and value.

One participant reflected:

You really need to have a facilitator who can facilitate. No disrespect to our facilitator who was very busy, but I think it's important to encourage the participants and engender a sense of value in what they are doing. Participants could be invited to help in the project's management for example. At the very least, the participants should be kept informed and not treated as an afterthought (Anonymous, 2006. *Pers. Comm.* 27.04.2006).

This comment illustrates one of the great dangers of engaging in participatory projects. Understanding the limitations of facilitators and organisers does not equate to accepting a second-rate experience. If a project does not live up to its promises or participants' expectations, it has the potential to discourage them from participating in other projects. Worse, it can leave them feeling disenfranchised, and as though they missed out on an opportunity.

A myriad of emails towards the end of 2005 illustrated Blackshaw's frustration with this slippage. As a last resort he asked me to act as an intermediary because he was aware there was a problem. During our subsequent phone discussion McKee acknowledged competing workloads had given both him and Stark limited time to work on the project. McKee was enthusiastic when I mentioned Blackshaw was still keen to finish the project, and we made a list of what needed to be completed and what was achievable (McKee, 2005. *Pers. Comm.* 25.11.2005).

⁸¹ During the project, McKee was chair of the Toowoomba Landcare Group and a director of the Queensland Landcare Foundation. Further, he was a participant in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission Leadership Program.

6.5.5 Project launch and completion

Local launch

Due to the problems outlined in Toowoomba above, the projects were launched at different times. Cooney wanted to maintain the project momentum and thus organised a local opening even the NMA was not able to launch the website simultaneously. The local exhibition was held at the Alexandrina Shire Council offices. These are linked to the Library which made the exhibition accessible to a wider audience. Cooney printed out each of the participants' images and stories and created a small exhibition on a wooden frame (see Figure 6.48 and 6.49).

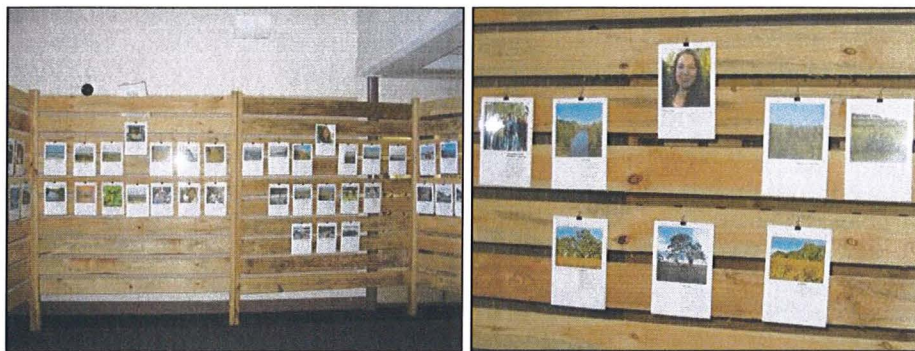


Figure 6.48: Goolwa *Basin Bytes* exhibition display [Photographs: Jo Wills, 2005].

Cooney asked two of the participants to speak about their project experiences at the opening. Gloria Jones gave an anecdotal speech about her experience developing the fishing segment with her husband Henry. It was the first time she had used a digital camera and, although she drew on her granddaughter for assistance, she was so delighted with the new medium that she went out and bought a digital camera of her own. Another participant, the youth representative Belinda (surname unknown), placed the project in context of her activities as a member of the South Coast Environmental Group, getting other young people involved in the project, and her love of the surrounding environment.



Figure 6.49: Goolwa *Basin Bytes* participant, Gloria Jones, speaking at the launch of the Goolwa project, with Belinda to the right, 17.11.2005 [Photograph: Jo Wills].

The Toowoomba Launch was not held until April 2006, but did coincide with the launch of the online exhibition. It was held in the Cobb and Co. Museum where images were on display for one month. Although I was unable to attend the launch, Blackshaw noted it was a small event and that the local mayor was present (Blackshaw, 2006. *Pers. Comm.*)

Online Exhibition

As noted above, the meeting midway through the project determined to organise images and text into thematic areas. These included: industry, environment, water, living, people, recreation and indigenous issues to illustrate the perspectives of two distinct but connected communities. Although the material was displayed collectively, the website did not make detailed links between the images and concepts portrayed that were needed to fully explore the relationship between the two communities. Material linking the two locations appeared somewhat lost within the themes that structured the website. Greater substantiation of the linkages would be needed for visitors to make sense of the way it was presented. For example, a very straight forward link about landcare groups and seed collecting could have been made. Further, it was not possible to follow the narrative threads of individual participant's stories. In Goolwa, one participant wanted to explore the chronological development of dredging, and McKee's images, when viewed together, are a journey through the Basin from Toowoomba to Goolwa.

6.5.6 Goolwa/Toowoomba Basin Bytes: participatory dimensions

As noted in 6.5.1 above, there were a number of new dimensions to consider from an evaluation perspective.

- ***How effectively are the communities connected via technology (online chat site, video conferencing, email)?***

There was very poor communication between the two communities. The Yahoo groups chat site did not function as anticipated, video conferencing did not occur, and contact between facilitators was minimal.

- ***Are there similarities between the types of topics or information that the participants create?***

Despite the numerous similarities more links could have been made to demonstrate this on the website. There was a lot of factual information, and the material for the stories was much more detailed than that provided for the previous two projects.

- ***How does having an additional presentation dimension affect the participants' interest and engagement in or understanding of the project?***

As noted above, this did not eventuate.

- ***How does having an additional presentation dimension affect the reception of the material by different audiences?***

As noted above, this did not eventuate.

In terms of project's ability to explore the potential of multimedia tools to link communities to discuss place-based issues, the project was not successful. The lack of interaction at a facilitator level, and the extended timeline due to poor communication, meant that even having simultaneous project launches was impossible. The material produced did, however, reflect both groups, and particularly Cooney's desire to think about the concept of environmental

management from a holistic perspective (see quote from initial facilitation interview and Figures 4.41, 6.42, 6.43 above).

Specific evaluation question 1

- *How were participatory and community engagement principles and practices used effectively in the execution of this project?*

The NMA responded to recommendations for increased staff attendance in communities by attending the first two workshops. However, as the evaluation did not play such an integral role, there was no sustained face-to-face contact between the NMA and participant communities. Even though there was a mid project organisational meeting, this was still at a managerial level and, to an extent, bypassed participants.

To an extent, Cooney devolved his facilitation control to those people he identified as participants at the beginning of the project. As coordinators of particular themes, he gave participants the opportunity to explore and represent a range of perspectives.

Evaluation/Action Research

Even though the evaluation was minimal in this project, the material collected illustrates the project dimensions and the different perspectives of those involved. It is interesting to reflect on whether the less intensive contact between facilitator and evaluator had ramifications for the project. From Higgins's perspective, however, the evaluation still had an impact on the project:

I think you've played a really significant role, as much more than just an evaluator because you have been in there helping to guide the project. You've been an active participant ... I'm glad you have been involved in it, because I think many of the ideas you have come up with, especially over the last couple of days are because you've worked as a curator in the past and you've got a museum background. It's been appreciated (Higgins, 2005. NMA Curator Interview 01.07.2005).

Specific evaluation question 2

- *In what ways did the principles of access, creativity, diversity, inclusion, and learning manifest in the project?*

Access

The NMA made itself much more accessible as an institution by sending staff out to the communities to run the first workshops and this was recognised by participants. Cooney's facilitation technique also meant participants had regular contact with him. Stark and McKee were not accessible as facilitators, although their personal relationship with some of the participants meant they were contactable via different channels.

Although there were no technical problems to speak of, the failure of the Yahoo groups' website was a barrier to effective communication, particularly between participants from the two communities.

Creativity

As in Wentworth, some participants chose to develop montages and combine images. There was also a degree of humour in some of the shots, particularly in Cooney's images. The capacity for fun should not be underestimated in a participatory context – indeed, Dickenson (2001) identified sense of humour as something that can infuse and enhance learning and each of Gardner's (1983, 1999) multiple intelligences.

More attention was paid to narrative in this project. Many of the captions are more detailed, and some participants created links between their images. Richard, in Goolwa, for example, wanted to discuss the impact of dredging the Murray Mouth, and his images were designed to show positive and negative environmental impacts. McKee's travels throughout the Basin led him to include images that represented a journey from Toowoomba to Goolwa.

Diversity

Cooney achieved his vision to include an indigenous perspective of environment and community, and influenced Toowoomba to find an indigenous representative.

Inclusion

As noted above, many of the participants were selected by the facilitators and this altered the notion of them having personal goals. Despite this, many were pleased to have the opportunity to showcase their expertise, such as Tim Wilson, the Ramsar officer, or Gloria and Henry Jones who had long term experience in the region's fishing industry. However, unlike the Wentworth participants, there was a degree of detachment.

Cooney's goal to get participants to act as facilitators was moderately successful. However, he noted that because the project dragged on for a while, it was difficult for people to stay in touch, particularly in relation to the youth participants who were more transient. He achieved his goal of inclusive representation, particularly with regards to the Ngarrindjeri people, but he spent quite some time actively pursuing this, and made many individual trips to Camp Coorong⁸² to secure the information.

Many of the goals for the Toowoomba facilitators fell through and this was due mostly to the fact that both Stark and McKee changed jobs during the project. Although they managed to get the images from the participants, the minimal personal interaction that the project engendered meant the idea of making links between the communities was unsuccessful. Further, and significantly, this impacted on the participants, and thus ended up being the antithesis of an inclusive approach to project development. That one of the participants felt the need to say, "participants ... should be kept informed & not treated as an afterthought" (Anonymous, 2006. *Pers. Comm.* 27.04.2006), is indicative of the alienation that can occur when projects like this fall over.

Learning

Again, the stories and images produced illustrate a range of learning styles at work throughout the project. One of the Goolwa participants speculated on the technical knowledge she had acquired as a result of being involved. She also noted that it had prompted more interaction with her grandchildren who showed

⁸² Camp Coorong is a Ngarrindjeri-run education centre located south of Goolwa in the Coorong National Park along the Younghusband Peninsula, South Australia.

her various features of the camera, how to upload images and so forth. Cooney also indicated he would be willing to work with the NMA on future projects, and use the cultural medium to explore NRM issues.

Specific evaluation question 3

- *Was there potential for museums to learn from participatory models used in other disciplines?*

Not as such. The problems faced in this project largely related to problems at a local level. However, the Photovoice model would be useful to consider for future projects.

However, it is useful to reflect on the different demographics and community profiles of each community, in a manner that reflects a more sociological analysis of community dimensions. Even a preliminary analysis, as illustrated in Figure 6.50, accentuates their different dimensions and how these emerged through the *Basin Bytes*' projects:



Figure 6.50: Different dimensions of communities in the third *Basin Bytes* project.

Specific evaluation question 4

- *Did face-to-face communication help*

Blackshaw, Higgins, Cooney and McKee, all identified face-to-face communication as crucial to the initial meetings, and their enjoyment, of the project:

I think it was vitally important for us to go in person because it was stated openly in Toowoomba that they were really pleased to see people from the NMA there ... that this hadn't come magically out of the sky, that we were there in person & weren't trying to impose something on them ... you can't do it remotely (Higgins, 2005. NMA Curator Interview 01.07.2005).

It set a scene and it also brought up to the surface the fact that it was a project not just being done locally by the participants, but that it fitted into a bigger program. I think having Alison from the MDBC there was really good to show the links there (Cooney, 2005. GBB Facilitator Interview 01.07.2005).

If we hadn't had that face-to-face meeting there wouldn't have been the momentum there is now (McKee, 2005. TBB Facilitator Interview 01.07.2005).

we've been able to take on board ... some of the recommendations from the previous two projects ... Things like the need for the museum to be more visible ... That has personally been really good because I've been more on top of it & more engaged. I've got to know people more & it's just a more enjoyable project to do (Blackshaw, 2005. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview 01.07.2005).

As noted earlier, Blackshaw, Higgins and I attended the first two workshops. However, the evaluation did not play such an integral role and as such there was no sustained face-to-face contact between the NMA and participant communities. When the facilitators met in Canberra in August 2005, the personal interaction sparked creative discussion and engagement. Trying to maintain this momentum, therefore, is a crucial component of project success and completion.

6.6 Conclusion

Basin Bytes was not a participatory project in the truest sense of the term because it was pre-designed by NMA staff and fulfilled an institutional niche without being adequately tested with community groups. In some respects, one could argue that the project was an example of an outsourced project – contractors (facilitators) were responsible to provide the NMA with content and product. More work was needed to keep the communities engaged in the project, perhaps via direct interventions from the NMA. However this argument does not reflect the adaptive approach NMA project managers, particularly Blackshaw, took to managing the project. Further, it does not reflect the care with which facilitation was undertaken, the obstacles within each community and the NMA, or the positive outcomes from a number of the projects, particularly Wentworth. It also does little justice to the fact that photographic projects have an almost ubiquitous appeal and can attract people from a range of interest groups and communities.

If one was assessing the project from a product perspective, one might question the degree to which communities fully engaged with the NRM topic. While an environmental perspective was evident, many of the images and stories reflect a broader interpretation of environment, one that is more consistent with the concept of sustainability. The project's capacity to allow participants to explore their own topics reflected Blackshaw's desire for a community-led project. However, it also illustrated the pitfalls of having too broad a topic. The imposed thematic focus in Goolwa and Wentworth, for example, showed that some participants were more confident working within stricter parameter.

While the ideal is to develop projects with flexible boundaries, participatory principles and a commitment to engagement processes, it is evident that an initial concept is required. This concept needs to be malleable enough to adapt to the needs and interests of communities of interest, place, practice and diversity. This raises the issue of self-led participatory learning and development, an issue that is central to the discussion of museum-based community projects, and which will be the basis for the following chapter.

PART 3: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 7

*Addressing the problem of participation in museums:
discussion and analysis*

7.1 Addressing the problem of participation in museums:

chapter overview and approach

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a comparative analysis of the research findings outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in relation to the participatory principles, practices and theories outlined in Chapter 2. This analysis is the basis for developing guidelines and a methodology for refining participatory practices and community engagement techniques within Australian museums, and this appears in the final section of this chapter, Section 7.5.

As stated in the introductory chapter, the rationale for this research, and the primary research question, has been to examine why museum community outreach projects have not engaged more fully with participatory practices (Chapter 1). I have sought to define these participatory practices and principles, both within the museum sector and from an interdisciplinary perspective, and have suggested their link to the concept of community engagement and democracy needs to be more clearly articulated within the Australian museum sector (Chapters 2 and 4). Further, I have argued that the complex concept of community has resonance with, but is different to, the notion of museum audience. I have suggested that a better understanding of participant experience in museum outreach projects has the potential to improve projects, their impact and their capacity for transformative learning for both institutions and participants (Chapters 2, 5 and 6). I have also examined how participatory practices manifest in the context of Australian museums, paying particular attention to outreach projects but also acknowledging there are varying degrees of community collaboration present in other types of museum projects (Chapter 4).

From a primary research perspective, the interviews conducted with Australian museum workers sought to establish how they define and value participatory practices, and how amenable they are to expanding and refining the participatory dimensions of project development (Chapter 4). The major case study, *Basin Bytes*, illustrated the importance of evaluating the stages of project development for each of the three NRM-based museum outreach projects. This evaluation research examined whether the projects had the capacity

to contribute to contemporary social and environmental issues, improve institutional relevance and practice, and/or provide opportunities for participant learning and capacity building (Chapter 6).

This chapter, therefore, draws these ideas, and project examples used throughout the thesis, together in four distinct sections. Section 7.2 examines the theoretical issues that are inherent in the definition of participation, reiterates why terminology is important, and suggests clearer definitions can be usefully integrated into mainstream museum practice of community outreach projects. Section 7.3 reviews participatory principles and processes used and developed by Australian museums and practitioners. It analyses these practices in relation to the models outlined in the literature review, considers why it is important to refine these ideas, and queries whether or not there are appropriate engagement skills within the industry to deliver these types of projects. Section 7.4 reflects on how the theoretical aspects of participatory project development and delivery play out in a practical context by analysing the major case study research and findings. On the basis of the discussion throughout the chapter, and the thesis, Section 7.5 concludes the overall analysis by presenting a participatory spectrum to help Australian museums plan for and develop participatory projects and process.

7.2 Revisiting the problems of definition

The introduction to this thesis reflected on the problem of defining the term “participation”. The first half of the literature review examined how different disciplines use the term and the issues that it raises, while the second half explored how the term translated to and was understood in the field of museum studies. The process of this research raised a number of additional and interrelated questions: “participating in what?” and “who is participating?” It also became apparent that other key terms embedded in the research question had multiple meanings – particularly “community” and “outreach”. While these issues have also been addressed in the literature review (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3) and in the review of Australian museum practices (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1), I have found that the “who” and “what” are usually dependent on the “why?” and “how?” Understanding the impetus for and means by which museums develop participatory community outreach, has therefore remained a primary research aim.

On the basis of the literature review and the applied case study research conducted for this thesis, I maintain that the multiple terms used to describe community-based museum projects are frequently misleading and blur the boundaries between audience and project participant. Further, I suggest that as the museum industry brings together a range of disciplines (particularly in the larger Australian state museums) there is greater potential for misunderstandings and multiple interpretations of relevant terms and concepts. This confusion, unintentional as it may be, nonetheless impacts unfavourably on the development and delivery of participatory projects and thus jeopardises the transformative learning capacity that many of these types of projects can provide. Some may consider this focus on terminology pedantic, however, I believe the use and misuse of terms has ramifications for the successful delivery of community projects.

7.2.1 *Participation*

How is the term participation used when museums work with communities? Scott (2005) argued the museum studies arena uses multiple terms to denote participatory activity. In particular, she noted that any consideration of this topic had to take into account the

literature categorised as social inclusion. The literature review and other research confirmed Scott's observations: I encountered a variety of terms used to denote and describe community-based museum projects. These are outlined in Figure 7.1:

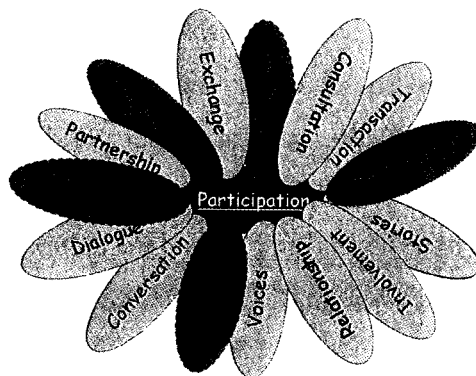


Figure 7.1: Words used within museums to describe community-based projects.

Are these words homogenous, and therefore capable of being used interchangeably to denote participation? I suggest this is not the case. Indeed, many have multiple meanings, particularly those terms that are highlighted in darker tones. I believe these words are most frequently used inappropriately in a participatory context.

It is relevant, therefore, to query how these words relate to the different discourses and disciplines addressed in Chapter 2 and those which reflect the practical aspects of Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In the first instance, the terms can be divided into two major groupings: words which have clear links to a discipline and theory (collaboration, engagement, capacity building, empowerment, inclusion and participation), and words which are more descriptive, practical or activity-based (consultation, conservation, dialogue, exchange, involvement, partnership, relationship, transaction, voices, stories).

Some of the theoretical terms relate specifically to other disciplines and discourses, particularly CCD (collaboration), community development (empowerment and social inclusion), NRM (participation and capacity building), and public participation (engagement). Yet many of these terms are also used in a museum context to denote and describe community interaction. The evolution of museum studies literature has also comprised an evolution of terms. Scott (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8), for example, noted

the shift from the use of participation and community consultation during the 1980s to the current term “social inclusion”. This observation is confirmed by the titles and substance of many museological texts, particularly those by British authors such as Dodd & Sandell (2001), Fleming (2001), Matarasso (2000), Newman (2001, 2005a, 2005b) and Sandell (1998). Political and social context has been particularly significant for these authors, and a number of other cultural commentators, such as Anderson (2005), Ellis (2003), Selwood (2004), have outlined the degree to which “social inclusion” has become a key component of British government policy and significantly shaped the cultural landscape. Thus, the term “inclusion” clearly has a currency within the museum arena and at a government level in Britain.

In America, however, the principal publication addressing community initiatives is titled *Mastering Civic Engagement* (AAM, 2002a: my emphasis). In Australia, only two publications closely address this topic (Museums Australia (Qld), 1998; Williams, 1995). These publications show that in terms of “engagement” and “inclusion”, the Australian museum industry remains linguistically uncommitted when it comes to community-based museum projects. If this were solely a linguistic issue then the substitution of terms would be of little consequence. The real issue is whether the democratic imperative that is entrenched in the concept of “participation” (as discussed in Chapter 2) is sufficiently present when institutions use the terms “inclusion” and “engagement”, particularly when one reflects on the findings in Section 7.2.3 which outline the current limitations of engagement training and skills within Australian museums.

The heritage of the term “participation” suggests the term represents principled commitment to stakeholder engagement and collaboration in policy making or institutional activities, for example, so as to improve a situation, participants’ skills, capacity and/or learning.¹ Thus, the term “participation” has three distinct characteristics. It requires action, learning and progress. Although it relates to the concept of “empowerment” it does not entirely encompass it, and thus the idea of empowerment needs to be considered more in the context of a project outcome.

¹ See Chapter 2 (2.2) for further discussion of this issue.

The subtle differences in terminology suggest there is a need for more museum workers to be more cognisant of the term's etymology and understand the context in which it is used. While it is closely related to all of the words identified in Figures 7.6 and 7.7, many of those terms have in-built restraints, caveats, conditions or escape clauses that do not comply with the democratic dimensions of "participation". For example: if a museum presents a project as participatory that does not have these attributes, what type of learning process is available? Will there be disappointment, and, as a result, disengagement? What are the dangers of promising something that you fail to deliver? These are good reasons for the term "participation" to be used cautiously rather than interchangeably – the participation tag should signify a particular type of project. I argue that for a project to be participatory it must have some fundamental requirements. These include involvement in developing the rationale, planning and structure of the project, the delivery of the project, being involved in the decision making process about the way it is displayed and presented to the public, as well as the overall assessment of the project.

One way of promoting a better understanding of participation is to consider it as process, one that incorporates multiple terms into a form of participatory methodology (see Figure 7.2). Participatory projects typically involve stages – developing relationships, outlining and modifying projects, delivering projects, and so forth. These stages are frequently time-heavy, and often require ongoing negotiation and review. However, they also need to be flexible: evidence from each of the *Basin Bytes* projects shows that projects unfold according to the particular needs and constraints of the individual communities. Thus developing a blueprint for participatory project presents a challenge. Project parameters need to be firm enough to have substance, but flexible enough to be adaptable. Building an understanding of this into project design, therefore, becomes an essential stage of the overall project plan. One of the key lessons from this research is that there needs to be a better understanding of this staged approach and a willingness to be adaptable to the needs mid project rather than as an afterthought. This echoes the staged process outlined in the hypothetical "making cups of tea" scenario at the beginning of this thesis. The stages are based on the idea that different types of actions beget different types of participation. It is not necessarily a staged process, nor does one have to begin at stage 1. What needs to be clear, however, is different styles or stages provide different depths of participation.

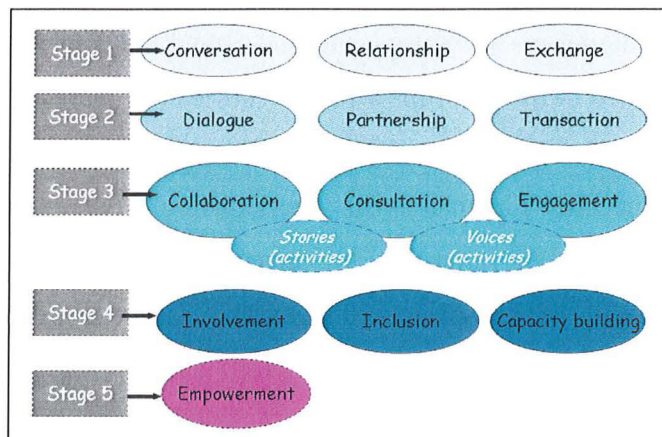


Figure 7.2: Participatory dimensions of project development.

Thus, rather than a term that can be substituted to suit the situation, this thesis contends that the concept of participation needs to be considered in relation to the operating environment and in relation to a staged process. Key questions for a participatory scenario, therefore, include: where is the participation taking place, who is participating, why are they participating, what are they participating in, and how is (or is) the participation being managed? This reiterates the importance of museum, community and project context for developing participatory projects (as outlined above in Section 7.2).

7.2.2 Community: audience, subject and participant

Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 established that, in the context of the New Museology and its impact on the industry, audience and visitor research have emerged as a key topic in the museum studies arena. The thesis has also shown that the concept of community plays a crucial role in museum work but that it is not confined to individuals or groups that visit museums. Indeed, community is often used in a broader context, encompassing audiences and other stakeholders that reflect a museum's collecting interests, sponsorship and funding, friends groups and associations and local, state or national context. It is also used to denote ethnicity or cultural connections, particularly in relation to Indigenous, migration and geographical issues, and all of the projects illustrate this. Within this subtopic, community can thus be split into two categories: that part of the community that visits museums and engages in their programs (audience), and the community about which the project is developed (subject). Embedded in the latter category is a participatory subset that

offers the chance for this community to be involved in creating the project as well as understanding the project message and being the subject. It is this group that often slips through the gaps in terms of terminology when it comes to museum research, evaluation and communication because it doesn't conform to a traditional audience or project development category.

A number of the projects discussed in this thesis, particularly *Future Harvest* and *Basin Bytes*, are good examples of this conundrum. The subject matter of each project was community and place focussed. Each was developed for and viewed by broad audiences, with an emphasis on those from regional areas, and also included people from these communities in the exhibition development. To understand the value and impact of such projects, research into audience perceptions is crucial, and is traditionally fulfilled by summative evaluation research. The value of participating in the development of the project, however, is generally not well documented, if at all. Apart from the value of the material gathered as part of the evaluation research undertaken for *Basin Bytes*, it is the process of doing this kind of evaluation analysis that has particular value in this instance. By evaluating the stages of project development in relation to the different stakeholders and community types, an understanding of the benefits and relevance of this type of work can be developed and incorporated into institutional planning and development. Figure 7.3, therefore, illustrates the stages of participatory project development that can be evaluated:

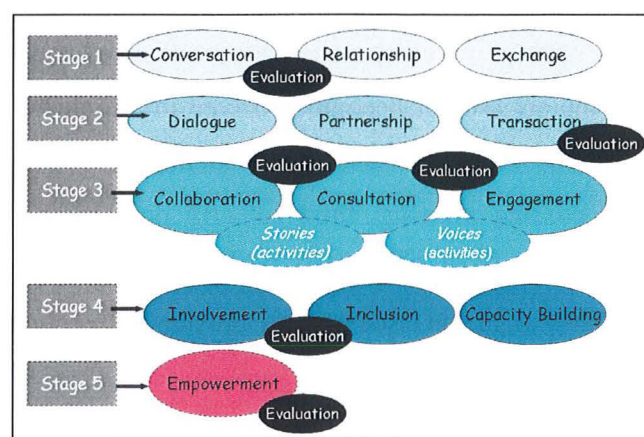


Figure 7.3: Evaluating participatory dimensions of project development.

7.2.3 Learning and capacity building

The problems with the terms learning and capacity building in museums are not so much that they are used interchangeably but because they are not used together. Again, Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 explored the evolution of museum studies literature in relation to museum education and, specifically, museum learning (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 1994; Kelly, 2004). Just as audience research was influenced by the New Museology and is now an accepted area of museum studies, so too is learning – indeed, it is an area that has substantial impact on museum work and activities (Falk & Dierking, 1995, 2000). Most learning within museums, however, is audience related (discounting, of course, the scientific and academic projects that individual researchers and curators pursue). Simplistically, therefore, this means that museum programs, such as exhibitions, public programs, collection tours and so forth, provide the visitors with an opportunity to learn about a subject or issue that the museum has chosen to develop. Museums might consult communities about the topic prior to project development via focus groups and formative evaluation, but essentially projects are developed in-house.

Learning techniques utilised in museums are infused by the progressive theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1996, 1999), constructivist learning theory (Hein 1996, 1998) and the contextual learning theory (Falk & Dierking, 2000). We know the context in which people learn is important. We are also aware that each visitor brings a range of experiences and circumstances with them and that these shape their ability and capacity to learn. If this is the case, what is it we hope audiences will take away from their visit that will inspire them to pursue an issue or become involved in a topic? Do museums need to conduct more research into what audiences do with the information they glean from programs rather than focussing on what they actually do during their museum visit? Further, are learning theories suitably applied in museum programs to enable visitors and communities to actively investigate an issue or topic outside of the museum environment?

Museums unquestionably provide different learning contexts but often fall short on capacity building because they are reluctant to adopt participatory approaches to project development. Yet as much of the capacity building within museums occurs during the project development phase the main beneficiaries are those that work within museums. If

the process of project development offers transformative learning opportunities that build their skills, knowledge and confidence, should museums be more focussed on getting people involved in project development?

7.2.4 Evaluation and research

Although museums conduct considerable evaluation research, it forms a different type of research to other subject-based museum research. Kelly (2004) argued that evaluation is more than just a methodology for understanding audiences and can increase the effectiveness and relevance of museum programs. This position is similar to Vancly et al.'s (2004: 556) discussion of "evaluation as being research for informing decision-making in all stages of project development". They argued that qualitative methods were appropriate in this approach, methods that have the potential to be much more participatory and thus be capacity-building in their own right. A methodology that integrates ongoing evaluation into project planning would provide increased opportunities for participatory engagement and transformative learning, and also enable museums to maintain their social relevance, which in turn would assist their financial standing and sustainability.

7.3 Participation practices in Australian museums: principles, processes and people

In the concluding section of Chapter 4, I argued that the Australian museum industry, particularly the larger institutions, demonstrated an awareness of and commitment to a range of participatory principles, particularly access, diversity, inclusion and learning. These principles, clearly evident in the museum studies literature and influenced by the New Museology, have influenced Australian museum policy and practices. They have also helped shape a clearer understanding of visitor needs, behaviour and learning styles – there has been a substantial research in the evaluation and visitor research sector (Kelly, 1997, 1999, 2004; Scott, 1995, 1997, 2003, 2004), and museum education has evolved to be a more complex area that embraces and caters for different learning styles (Roberts, 1997; Hooper-Greenhill, 2002).

The increase of research in visitor studies and audience evaluation, and evidence of museums' commitment to visitor satisfaction (Black, 2005; Lavine, 1992; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994b), has brought museums into line with consumer-based leisure and pedagogical industries. Rather than just providing a product or presenting knowledge, however, many museums (particularly the national and state museums) are increasingly concerned with presenting access to knowledge development, and learning about the multiple dimensions and applications of knowledge via their collections. In this context, the notion of inclusion in knowledge development seems logical. However, it remains a step that many Australian museums and museum practitioners hesitate to take because of concerns about research integrity, the implied loss of authority that goes hand in hand with such approaches, and the spectre of unmanageable projects that have the potential to damage museums' reputations and standing. Even when institutions do engage with communities at a participatory project level (and Projects 11 and 21 are good examples of this), there is minimal research into or evaluation of the participants' experience – a stark contrast to the commitment to in-house evaluation research. This means there is less opportunity to formally recognise project development processes, and limited recognition of the agency these projects can inspire.

It remains relevant, therefore, to ask why, when there is recognition and commitment to participatory principles and a growing culture of evaluation in museums, the practice of participation and engagement is sidelined from mainstream policies? On the basis of the research conducted for this thesis, I suggest there is a distinction between principles and processes when it comes to participatory practices. What emerges from the analysis of Australian museum worker interview transcripts is an interest in the concept of expanded participatory programs, recognition of their value, as well as a pragmatic understanding of their status within current funding submission and grant prerequisites. As tangible activities, however, participatory programs are still often regarded as external to the major purpose of collecting material culture. One could argue this stance supports the stated purpose of museums identified by ICOM and Museums Australia. Yet, when one considers Van Mensch's (2003) application of the New Museology to ensure community is the nucleus of museum work (rather than collections), and ICOM's notion of museums being in "the service of society", there seems to be an uneasy fit between theory and practice, and principle and process when it comes to community participation engagement methods.

7.3.1 Participatory principles present in Australian museums

Chapter 4 discussed whether and how the principles of access, diversity, learning and inclusion developed in, and influenced, Australian museums. This subsection first considers how these principles manifest in the project examples outlined in Table 7.1 and how they reflect policy development. I then examine the projects in relation to the principles contained in some of the interdisciplinary theory and participatory models outlined in the literature review (Chapter 2).

A comparative analysis of the projects highlights the presence of these issues – access, diversity, learning and inclusion – as prevalent and influential in Australian museums. Fifteen of the projects have two or more objectives and/or associated learning dimensions that can be considered participatory (see Table 7A). Project 5 is the only one that incorporates all four principles.

Project No.	Project Name	Access	Diversity	Inclusion	Learning
1	South Melbourne Oral History Project			x	
2	McKay Volunteer Team	x			
3	Women on Farms Gathering				x
4	Community Access Gallery	x	x	x	
5	Beirut to Baghdad	x	x	x	x
6	Keeping Culture	x	x		x
7	Indigenous Gallery	x	x	x	
8	Many Rhymes, One Rhythm		x	x	x
9	Pass the Salt			x	x
10	Museum Resource Centre Network	x		x	x
11	MuseumLink		x	x	
12	Interpretive centre		x	x	
13	Sharing their Legacy	x		x	x
14	Community Collections	x		x	x
15	Signature Quilt		x		
16	Committing to Place			x	x
17	FATE				x
18	Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom				x
19	Custodian's Welcome		x	x	
20	A Changing People, A Changing Land		x	x	
21	Future Harvest		x	x	
22	Basin Bytes	x		x	x

Table 7A: A comparative analysis of project examples in relation to the core principles of access, diversity, inclusion and learning.

The principles of learning and diversity are present in more than half of the projects. These principles have practical and well-defined attributes: they have their own distinct bodies of knowledge and are tangibly represented by policies and procedures within the museum sector. Diversity, comprising cross-cultural and multicultural diversity, for example, is evidenced by Projects 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 19, 20 and 21. In an Australian context, the recognition and integration of Aboriginal culture and traditions, migration histories as well as gender and sexuality issues into museum projects and policies are particularly important, as evidenced by Museums Australia's suite of policies: *Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities* (2005); *Women's Policy* (2000); *Gay and Lesbian Policy* (1999); *Cultural Diversity Policy* (2000). Learning is also a conceptual principle – while it can't be fully

prescribed by policy, the commitment to the educational role of museums is strong within Australia and within the literature of museums studies. One could argue that learning needs to be broken down into learning styles, and that the learning theories outlined by Falk & Dierking (2000), Hein (1996, 1998) and Kelly (2004), as well as the interpretation principles outlined by Tilden (1977), Beck & Cable (2002) and Black (2005), inform the educational dimensions of museum programs.

In policies, the notion of access is viewed more in terms of public access (opening hours, staff contact and information) and physical access (facilities, buildings and disabilities). The former is demonstrated by the development of the *Regional Hubs Projects* in Geraldton (WA) and Wagga Wagga (NSW), training programs such the Western Australian Museum's *Museum Assistance Program* and the *Museum Resource Centre Network* in Queensland, and the interest in access to collections via technology as evidenced by Project 2. However, there is also a growing recognition of access in a programmatic sense, as illustrated by the *Access Gallery* at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne (Project 4) and its South Australian counterpart at the Migration Museum: *The Forum: Community Access Gallery*. At a national policy level, however, access only appears in the *Code of Ethics* (Museum Australia, 1999).

Sixteen of the projects in Table 7B fall into the category of inclusion, and this confirms the broad intention for these outreach projects to engage and interact with a range of communities. There is no formal recognition of inclusion at a policy level, however, Section 2.14 of Museums Australia's *Code of Ethics* refers to "community and multicultural involvement" (Museums Australia, 1999: 4). It seems reasonable to suggest that the relevance of the term "inclusion" has grown since this policy was written and that a review might directly reference social inclusion. Scott noted the term "inclusion" has supplanted "participation" in the museum sector and suggested museologists, such as Dodd & Sandell (2001), Sandell (2002), use the term to refer to broad community engagement and involvement (Scott, 04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8). Section 7.3.1 (below) focuses specifically on the issue of terminology and its use in this context. However, this is a good example of how the interchangeable use of terms reflects inconsistent policy and, therefore,

practices. Thus, I believe we must ask if the principle is inclusion, how is its significance to be recognised, and how can it be translated into tangible practice?

Intuition versus policy: is engagement inherent in museum practice?

The literature review (Chapter 2) identified the American Association of Museums' 2002 *Museums and Communities Initiative* as having made a crucial contribution to the topic of engagement. Hirzy (2002) argued that the principle of engagement is intuitive and therefore does not need to be included in formal policies. The comments are interesting given her own commitment to the principle of community engagement, exemplified in her contributions to and analysis of the Museums and Communities Initiative. Hirzy suggested eight "museum assets" were identified during the dialogues as ways and means museums have to develop relationships with communities. These assets – "accessibility ... connectedness ... safety ... objectivity ... trustworthiness ... reward ... substance ... and reciprocity" (2002: 15) – are built upon an exchange rather than a transaction-based process. They provide a useful spectrum via which to consider the participatory dimensions of museum projects and are applied to the 22 project examples in Table 7.B below:

Project No.	Access	Connectedness	Safety	Objectivity	Trustworthiness	Reward	Substance	Reciprocity
1		x			x	x	x	x
2	x	x			x	x	x	
3		x			x		x	x
4	x	x			x	x	x	x
5	x	x			x		x	x
6	x	x			x	x	x	x
7	x	x			x		x	
8		x	x		x		x	
9		x		x	x		x	x
10	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
11	x	x	x		x		x	x
12		x		x	x		x	x
13	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
14	x	x			x	x		x
15		x			x		x	
16		x		x	x		x	x
17		x		x	x		x	x
18		x			x	x	x	x
19	x	x			x		x	x
20		x			x		x	x
21		x			x		x	x
22	x	x	x		x		x	x

Table 7B: Hirzy's (2002) "Museum assets" applied to the projects.

In this table, *Museum Resource Centre Network* (Project 10) and *Sharing Our Legacy* (Project 13) contain the most “assets”. The former is an outreach training provision organisation, one that is integrated in regional Queensland. In terms of providing assets to the community, it represents a commitment to learning and best practice. While the service provides training and access programs, it also relies on Museum Development Officers to provide these opportunities. Project 13 was a collaborative project devised by a government department, museum and historical society venture. It aimed to engage communities of interest in developing exhibitions that addressed experiences and memories of war. The notion of reciprocity, in this instance, was expressed as collaboration by Amanda James, the Community History Officer who oversaw *Sharing Our Legacy* (Project 13) for the History Trust of South Australia (James, 2002: website).

Connectedness, trustworthiness, substance and reciprocity stand out as key attributes of the projects in Table 7.2 (although it should be acknowledged that this cursory assessment was made on the basis of limited evaluation material for most of the projects). It is useful to consider the impact of these attributes in relation to Hirzy’s (2002: 15) definitions:

Connected: Inspires positive personal associations and a sense of ownership and identity ...
Trustworthy: Well-intentioned, credible, and with transparent motivation ...
Substantive: Confers value, provides context, and shapes meaning;
Reciprocal: Dedicated to shared goals and interests.

The notion of exchange is clear in relation to connectedness and reciprocity. Connectedness reflects a level of direct personal involvement in projects. For the Aboriginal Heritage Unit (Project 6), connection to members of the Indigenous community is crucial and required to promote agency and capacity in heritage management. Reciprocity is evident in many of the projects, but particularly in *Women on Farms Gathering* (Project 3) and *Community Collections* (Project 14), where there is a clear notion of knowledge exchange for both parties.

Exchange is less evident, however, in the other two assets. Indeed, I believe they embody a degree of hierarchy (unintentionally) that is representative of the power relationships between museums and communities. For instance, trustworthiness suggests that one group is likely to have to trust the other at a more fundamental level. Even though museums’ status as public institutions provide them with this implied sense of trustworthiness, as an

attribute it is somewhat hard to characterise. If we look at the *Beirut to Baghdad* exhibition (Project 5) the Arabic community had to trust that the museum would interpret their story using the information they had provided. The extensive use of oral testimony in the exhibition is evidence that this did occur (Chidiac, 2005), but it also reflects the issue of editorial control being in the hands of the project developers and producers. The issue of substance also relies upon choice; the manner in which Hirzy (2002) discussed substance suggests that one group is more active in the conferring, the contextualising and the shaping of meaning than the other. *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm* (Project 8) and *Pass the Salt* (Project 9) are good illustrations of this degree of direction. But I also wonder whether the idea of “substance” being a museum asset is another way of saying authority. In this context, it is useful to reflect on other contributors to the *Museums and Community Initiative*, such as Schaffer-Bacon (2002), who argued unreservedly that collaborative projects had to surrender a degree of authority to achieve community agency in collaborative museum projects. Further, Hirzy’s awareness of the contextual nature of engagement practices suggests there is a need for adaptive practices within the museum profession, yet there is no evidence as to where this adaptive process is learned and practiced.

My intention is not to critique the role of museums in this regard. In fact, I believe this exemplifies how museums see their role working with communities: developing relationships based on collection and themes, and providing a better understanding of material culture and society. Thus, clearly the role of museums and their ability to be a social asset is vital to their sustainability. The issue, rather, is that these assets suggest a level of equality that is incompatible with contemporary practice. This is unlikely to change without practical guidelines or a concerted effort to address this concern, and this is clear from the formal interviews and information discussions with Blackshaw during evaluation of *Basin Bytes*. No matter how much you might want participation and equality, or the associated behavioural change, you need to have the right framework in which to implement it. Thus, I believe there is a disparity between intent and principle, with practice and implementation.

Reality versus rhetoric: Principles of community engagement

The literature review also identified the community engagement toolkit that Aslin & Brown (2004) developed for the Murray-Darling Basin Commission as a useful model through which to think about participatory principles and dimensions. Like many museologists, these NRM practitioners chose another term to signify participation: “engagement”. They used seven dynamic values identified by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to devise a list of engagement principles, and argued these are inherent to the term engagement. These “values” included: courage, inclusiveness, commitment, respect and honest, flexibility, practicability and mutual obligation. Significantly, however, the authors noted that in order to be relevant the principles needed to be applicable and achievable at a practical level – that is, “reality as well as rhetoric” (Aslin & Brown, 2004: 17).

How useful are these principles in a museum context? Again, I have analysed the project examples in relation to these principles (and their corresponding values within the context of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission) in Table 7C in order to determine which emerge as important.

Project No.	Mandate for Change (Courage)	Effective Communication (Inclusiveness)	Shared vision (Commitment)	Representativeness (Respect & honesty)	Mutual Learning (Flexibility)	Long Term Goals (Practicability)	Negotiation, Collaboration, Cooperation (Mutual obligation)
1	x	x		x			
2		x	x	x		x	x
3		x	x	x	x	x	x
4		x		x			x
5	x	x		x	x		
6	x	x	x		x	x	x
7		x	x	x			
8	x	x	x	x	x		
9	x	x	x	x			x
10	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
11		x	x		x		
12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
13		x		x			x
14		x		x			
15		x	x	x			
16	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
17	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
18		x			x		
19	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
20		x	x	x			x
21	x	x		x	x	x	x
22	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table 7C: Aslin & Brown's (2004) principles of community engagement applied to the projects.

as the topic the project is tackling. If, however, one reflects on community, the contextual nature is more issue-based, such as the issue of NRM in the Murray-Darling Basin as evidenced by the major case study in Chapter 6. Further, developing outreach projects requires an understanding of this process in relation to the broad social environment. The box in Figure 7.4 illustrates the internal and external dimensions of participatory project development. The type of museum and choice of project is determined by institutional and industry concern, that is internal (in-house) considerations that reflect the mission and collection. Other factors that affect project development appear on the outside of the box, that is the type of community and the type of engagement required to undertake the project.

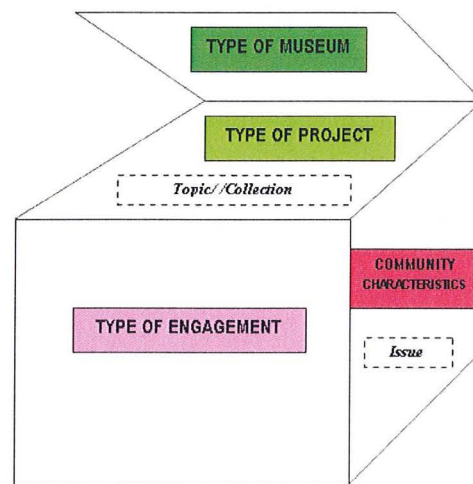


Figure 7.4: Museums and community engagement: internal and external social context.

I believe these four factors are the basis for considering participatory project development in an outcome-focussed context. Each is important in terms of project development; indeed, each could easily be considered the starting point. It is reasonable to suggest, however, that the main instigators for participatory projects come from either the museum or the community. If the museum is the instigator, for example, it is likely that it will be focussed on its own project outcomes before it factors issues like participatory learning and engagement. Community-led projects, however, are more often governed by external circumstances – those outside of the control of the museum – and thus require an understanding of the environmental, social and/or political context and issues that communities are facing. If community is the driving force behind project development, then a different configuration of consideration is required.

Table 7D contextualises the projects in relation to museum, project, and community type. Two issues are immediately apparent: the number of state museum projects, and the number of exhibitions that are developed in this capacity. One must also take note of the number of projects developed by the NMA as it is only one institution in comparison to the number of state museums. Given that the projects were selected as good examples of participatory activities and outreach projects, one can argue that this breakdown is representative of practices in the Australian industry.

Project No.	Project Name	Type of museum	Type of project	Community characteristic
1	<i>South Melbourne Oral History Project</i>	State	Exhibition/ oral history	Place; Diversity
2	<i>McKay Volunteer Team</i>	State	Collection/ research	Interest; Practice
3	<i>Women on Farms Gathering</i>	State	Collection/ research	Practice; Diversity
4	<i>Community Access Gallery</i>	State	Exhibition	Diversity
5	<i>Beirut to Baghdad</i>	State	Exhibition/ collections	Diversity
6	<i>Keeping Culture</i>	State	Outreach/ training	Diversity; Practice
7	<i>Indigenous Gallery</i>	Community	Exhibition	Practice
8	<i>Many Rhymes, One Rhythm</i>	National	Public program/ education	Interest; Diversity
9	<i>Pass the Salt</i>	National	Exhibition (online)/ collection	Place; Practice
10	<i>Museum Resource Centre Network</i>	State	Outreach/ training	Practice; Place
11	<i>MuseumLink</i>	State	Exhibition/ public program	Interest; Diversity
12	<i>Interpretive centre</i>	Community/ Ecomuseum	Exhibition	Place; Diversity
13	<i>Sharing their Legacy</i>	State	Exhibition	Interest
14	<i>Community Collections</i>	State	Exhibition/ collection	Interest
15	<i>Signature Quilt</i>	Regional	Public program	Interest
16	<i>Committing to Place</i>	National	Research	Practice; Place
17	<i>FATE</i>	State	Research	Practice
18	<i>Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom</i>	National	Education	Interest
19	<i>Custodians Welcome</i>	Ecomuseum	Public program	Diversity
20	<i>A Changing People, A Changing Land</i>	National	Exhibition	Place; Practice
21	<i>Future Harvest</i>	State	Exhibition	Place; Practice
22	<i>Basin Bytes</i>	National	Exhibition (online)/ public program/ collection	Place; Interest

Table 7D: Museum projects: type of museum and project, community characteristic.

Analysis of community characteristics in this context is also interesting. Projects have been assessed on the basis of the predominant attributes and project intention. Many of the projects address a range of community types but only “practice” appears dominant and then only in a secondary capacity. In the first instance, thus, there is a relatively even spread: diversity (4), interest (7), place (6) and practice (5). Even from this small list of projects, there is remarkably small number of projects with diversity as the primary attribute, particularly if one recalls that the industry is guided by one main publication in this regard, Museums Australia’s (Qld) (1998), and that the major issue addressed in this is indigenous and multicultural cultural diversity.

This is not to suggest that a need for cultural sensitivity and protocols is unimportant. Museums Australia (Qld)’s publication clearly outlines that these are important considerations when developing projects. Rather, it suggests that there are additional issues that need to be considered when developing collaborative projects, and that these require developers to consider the contextual nature of projects in relation to the specific communities that are being engaged. To do this, I believe it is important to consider the engagement techniques that museums utilise, how effective these are, and how other methods that are highlighted in the participatory spectrums and ladders might be applicable in a museum context.²

Arnstein's ladder of participation

Chapter 2 identified and discussed the impact of the participatory ladder that Arnstein (1969) developed to assist development in the planning industry. The eight rungs represented different types of community participation and engagement in collaborative projects: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. These stages are presented in Table 7E in which each of the project examples has been shaded to illustrate the degree of participation it embodies in relation to Arnstein’s (1969) types.

² This includes spectrums, ladders and discourses discussed in the literature review, Chapter 2.

Project no.	Manipulation	Therapy	Informing	Consultation	Placation	Partnership	Delegated Power	Citizen control
1	x	x	x					
2	x	x	x	x				
3	x	x	x	x	x	x		
4	x	x	x	x				
5	x	x	x	x				
6	x	x	x	x	x			
7	x	x	x					
8	x	x	x	x				
9	x	x	x	x	x			
10	x	x	x	x	x	x		
11	x	x	x	x	x			
12	x	x	x	x	x	x		
13	x	x	x	x				
14	x	x	x					
15	x	x	x					
16	x	x	x	x				
17	x	x	x	x	x			
18	x	x	x					
19	x	x	x	x	x	x		
20	x	x	x	x	x			
21	x	x	x	x	x			
22	x	x	x	x	x			

Table 7E: Project examples in relation to Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation.

Kodja Place (Project 12) and *Custodian's Welcome* (Project 19) are both examples of community museum projects and it is interesting that these stand out in relation to the Arnstein's (1969) participatory ideals even *though they don't meet the participatory ideal*. Once again, the *Museum Resource Centre Network* (Project 10) emerges as a front-runner in terms of participatory dimensions – partly through its partnerships with local councils and other statutory bodies as well as in relation to the types of communities that it involves. The *Women on Farms Gathering* (Project 3), another state museum example, is assessed at this level because it has radically altered the type of relationship Museum Victoria has with a new collection and its ongoing use and evolution. It is representative of the type of projects museums can develop yet still falls within the boundaries of manageability for the institution.

Marginson's access and participation model

As suggested in the previous section, it is useful to use a model adapted from within the museum industry, and in this case, Australia. Chapter 2 argued that Marginson's (1993) model (clearly adapted from Arnstein, 1969) disregarded outreach, public programs and learning, and concurred with Trotter's (1996) critical assessment that it lacked a clear sense of community. Despite these limitations, I make reference to Marginson's model in Table 7F but only consider the exhibition-based projects. As per the previous table, boxes are shaded to illustrate which projects incorporated which processes.

Project example	Public relations	Information dissemination	Information collection	Interaction/discussion	Share in decision making	Partnership	Delegated control	Community control
1	*	*	*					
4	*	*	*	*				
5	*	*	*	*				
7	*	*	*					
9	*	*	*					
11	*	*	*	*				
12	*	*	*	*	*	*		
13	*	*	*					
14	*	*	*					
20	*	*	*	*	*			
21	*	*	*	*	*			
22	*	*	*	*	*			

Table 7F: Exhibition projects in relation to Marginson's (1993) access and participation model for exhibition development.

Only one of the projects works at the partnership level, and interestingly this is the ecomuseum/community project. Central to the development of this project was time and negotiation. Most of the projects involve the community, but do not include them in setting the project parameters or designing the outcomes. Even *Basin Bytes* (Project 22) only reaches the fifth stage because of the predefined boundaries that surrounded the projects format. *Future Harvest* (Project 21) and *A Changing Place, A Changing Land* (Project 20) are like-wise categorised – even though some of the communities in relation areas for both projects developed their own exhibitions to complement the major exhibitions, they were still devised in accordance to very specific museum guidelines and frameworks.

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) -- Public Participation Spectrum

Chapter 2 also addressed the IAP2 spectrum which outlines five types of participation – informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering (Figure 7.5). Each of these types, it suggests, embodies different participation goals that comprise a promise to the public in terms of the way the projects are developed, delivered and finalised. In this spectrum there is still an implicit sense that there is a facilitator or an agency running the project that controls which degree of collaboration is going to be used. But there is also an implicit sense that which ever it is governs the way decisions and outcomes are made. This spectrum provides a range of choices for those engaged in the collaborative/participation process rather than a hierarchical or sequential model (see Table 7G).

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:	Promise to the Public:
We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:	Example Techniques to Consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fact sheets ● Web sites ● Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public comment ● Focus groups ● Surveys ● Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops ● Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen Advisory Committees ● Consensus-building ● Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen juries ● Ballots ● Delegated decisions

Figure 7.5 The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum acknowledges the different goals, promises and methods inherent in the participatory process (IAP2, 2005: website).

Table 7G tests some of the project examples against the various stages of the IAP2 spectrum, particularly those that have featured strongly in the principles and processes. For instance, the *Women on Farms Gathering* (Project 3) is essentially a collections-based project that seeks to acquire material produced by a community of practice in an ongoing capacity. At the annual gatherings, an iconic object is added to the collection, and an additional square is added to the group's banner. Thus the collection, and the banner, are evolving and present the museum with a collection challenge: its condition and scope changes annually and is grows in accordance with what the group members decide to acquire, rather than what the museum directs. Thus, in relation to the IAP2 spectrum, this project can be seen to be collaborative:

INFORM	Public participation goals	Promises to the public	Technique used
Project 15: <i>Signature Quilt</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide public with a creative project that identifies & focuses on women who have made a significant contribution to Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To keep public informed of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer seamstresses Information on website Conference papers
CONSULT	Public participation goals	Promises to the public	Technique used
Project 1: <i>South Melbourne Oral History Project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain information and stories from women in the South Melbourne community in order to develop more knowledge about the history of women in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include community stories in an exhibition and promote women's place in local history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral history interviews Community liaison Student interviewers
Project 5: <i>Beirut to Baghdad</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain information & stories from the Arabic community about the collections held in the PHM & in order to represent their community in an exhibition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include community stories in exhibition & expand collection information to promote & document Australian Arabic heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open collections Community liaison Video interviews Conference papers
Project 7: <i>Lady Denman Indigenous Gallery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain permission from local Indigenous group to mount an exhibition that addressed local Indigenous issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent the Indigenous heritage of the local area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation sessions & community liaison
INVOLVE	Public participation goals	Promises to the public	Technique used
Project 2: McKay <i>Volunteer Project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with former workers from the McKay factory to gather information about the collection To include former worker in the development of a management strategy and research agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum provides greater access to McKay related information via programs & websites Dedicated research into significance of McKay Acquisition & preservation of material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer program, including training Oral history interviews Collections management
Project 4: <i>Community Access Gallery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To communicate a multilayered understanding of immigration using community voices and material To work with local groups in project planning to promote and develop planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exhibit work and promote cultural diversity To include stories from different immigrant groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibition proformas Exhibition advice Exhibitions & public programs Oral histories Publications
Project 6: <i>Keeping Culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop keeping places for the management of Aboriginal material culture To include Aboriginal communities in the management of collections and heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist Indigenous communities interested in developing a Keeping Place To promote museum training for Indigenous communities To improve understanding & care of Indigenous material culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills and training sessions Outreach education

Project 8: <i>Many Rhymes, One Rhythm</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with school children to develop lyrics that addressed NRM issues for pre-defined hip hop rhythms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To involve children in cultural activities during <i>CrocFest</i> To produce video & audio material that reflected the issues participants identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom music sessions Outreach & public programs Website
Project 9: <i>Pass the Salt</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with community to develop stories for an online exhibition To work with agencies to develop a better understanding of salinity & identify project participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exhibit their stories & ideas about salinity on a community website To acquire material culture that reflects NRM issues eg: salinity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website (online exhibition) Consultation sessions Information sessions
Project 11: <i>MuseumLink</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with local communities on contemporary issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a space for addressing contemporary issues of relevance to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibitions Consultation Exhibition assistance
Project 13: <i>Sharing their Legacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage local communities in acquiring information about wartime experiences To use museums to address issues relating to Veterans Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a framework in which to develop an exhibition To support & recognise the experiences of War Vets & their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibitions Collections Oral History
Project 14: <i>Community Collections</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To showcase the collecting interests of the local public to museum visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an opportunity for community collectors to display their collections in the museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibitions Collections
Project 18: <i>Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a media interview scenario for selected students To engage an audience in an education experience during which they can ask questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide media training for chosen students To stage interviews in a public arena To broadcast interviews with politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Public programs
Project 20: <i>A changing people, a changing land</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with local museums & communities to discuss agricultural issues To work with regional councils & local groups in project planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To display local exhibitions To leave local exhibitions in local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visits Meetings Collections
Project 21: <i>Future Harvest</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with NRM experts to identify eggs of innovative farming practices & case studies for inclusion in a travelling exhibition To work with regional councils & local groups in project planning & to promote the exhibition aims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For field curators to respond to issues raised by participant farmers & regional councils, document visitor opinions & answer public questions To promote sustainable agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visits Oral history Short films Photography Regional meetings & public programs
COLLABORATE	Public participation goals	Promises to the public	Technique used
Project 3: <i>Women on Farms Gathering</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a partnership between MV & the <i>Women on Farms</i> gathering To acquire, preserve & interpret the group's associated material culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collect icons on an annual basis & accept material additions to objects To incorporate material into collection using MV's knowledge of best practice documentation, preservation & interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face attendance at annual gatherings In-house advocacy Development of research papers & website
Project 10: <i>Museum Resource Centre Network</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage local museums in the broader network of museums To provide training for volunteers engaged in museum & heritage work To inspire local residents to engage with & care for cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance & promote community understanding of museum networks & resources To assist local community organisations in their museum-related activities To respond to requests for assistance by local heritage organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regionally- based staff Grants, exhibition, collection management etc assistance
Project 16: <i>Committing to Place</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work collaboratively with staff from 3 different institutions To work with communities to explore their sense of place via museum outreach projects To develop projects for the NMA website To identify potential collection items in the process of working with the community To evaluate participants' project experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide opportunities to participate in participatory cultural projects To showcase project work on the NMA website To assess the effectiveness of the projects via evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online web exhibitions Public programs Meetings Community liaison

Project 17: FATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop demonstration sites on which to explore ways of integrating wildlife management with commercial farming To explore ways of developing a sustainable commercial market for Australian native species To work with Indigenous groups to promote sustainable land management for commercial & environmental profit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To monitor the social, environmental & economic impact of proposed activities To assist in developing marketing strategies To communicate finding to broader community To work collaboratively with landholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face consultation Fieldwork Development of demonstration sites Website Newsletters Marketing
Project 22: Basin Bytes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a partnership with groups & local councils within the Murray-Darling Basin & involve different community groups in taking images & developing stories for inclusion in online exhibition To enhance & promote understandings of NRM issues within a defined geographic area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To incorporate stories & images chosen by participants into project website & into NMA collection To include design ideas into final website layout To evaluate project & promote it to broader museum industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally facilitators & participants Online database & exhibition - website Storytelling & photography Workshops Evaluation Conference papers
EMPOWER	Public participation goals	Promises to the public	Technique used
Project: 12 Kodja Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop an interpretation centre relevant to both Aboriginal & non Aboriginal communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To negotiate with all groups within community & integrate multiple interpretations into centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-led curating Negotiation Trust building exercises Local project management
Project 19: Custodian's Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For local Indigenous group to welcome new migrants from Burma To help connect new migrants to their new home To promote cross-cultural collaboration & learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop an event in accordance with Indigenous traditions To provide an event that respected the needs and wishes of the migrant community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative meetings between stakeholders Negotiation Public programs Indigenous-led project management

Table 7G: Museum projects in relation to the IAP2 Participation Spectrum.

From this analysis, it is evident that three of the spectrums are most applicable to the work of museums – consult, involve and collaborate. The way these manifest into tangible techniques clearly illustrates the suitability for outreach projects to be considered in this manner. The spectrum also highlights the crucial nature of communication, particularly face-to-face communication, as part of the participatory project process. The major strength of the model is that it breaks participation and engagement into different types and suggests that these different types are achieved in different ways, thus highlighting the need to focus on the different processes involved in different types of engagement.

Participatory approaches to museum outreach/community engagement - based on Ross et al. (2002)

The final model considered is Ross et al.'s (2002) typology of participatory approaches to NRM in Australia. In effect, their approach is a 'who, what, where, how' model that seeks to demystify the dimensions of participatory projects. It opens up, I believe, the debate about the processes needed to develop participatory projects – it makes them more tangible

and achievable because it recognises and considers projects in relation to five key elements: “agency ... tenure ... participants ... task ... (and) duration” (Ross et al., 2002: 2005). Ross et al. (2002) acknowledge the complexity of participatory project dimensions and their contextual nature. Further, they recognise that projects can entail, embody and require multiple approaches depending on the nature of the project, stakeholders and environment. An acknowledgement of stakeholder complexity is central to their model: they dissect the notion of community in a manner that makes the idea and dynamics of community projects more logical and accessible. This understanding is then augmented by focussing on the characteristics of different projects that might be suitable to different stakeholder groups, project and community examples and, finally but very importantly, a column devoted to providing advice as to how to implement the projects.

My hypothesis that there is value in a complex understanding of stakeholders and the notion of community has promoted me to adapt their approach to the museum sector in order to test whether or not it can help us better understand the processes of participatory museum projects. Therefore, Figure 7H duplicates the first column of the model, the second column presents stakeholder types and characteristics in a museum context (based either on collections or activities), and the third column links the project examples used in this thesis to the different stakeholders. I have deliberately left out the advice column that appeared in Ross et al.’s model: the type of advice given for museum projects is dependent on the terminology discussions that are addressed in Section 7.3. However, the inclusion of an advice column is central to the value of the model, and I regard this as an essential component of the model outlined in Section 7.4.

Stakeholder/ community/ (who)	Stakeholder/ community characteristics (what)	Project Example (where/when)
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private collectors • Individual researchers • Individual oral history interviewees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>South Melbourne Oral History Project</i>
Community-based management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous communities • Migrant communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Aboriginal Heritage Unit</i> • <i>Custodian's Welcome</i> • <i>Access Gallery</i> • <i>Museumlink</i>
Community collective activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local (place-based) groups (with no formal qualifications for membership required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kodja Place</i>
Organised interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal special interest groups • Local museums, friends groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lady Denman Community Museum</i> • <i>Women on Farms Gathering</i> • <i>Signature Quilt</i> • <i>Community Collections</i>
Composite stakeholder bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple stakeholder management groups from a broad area but who are not individually responsible for the area/ tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pass the Salt</i> • <i>Basin Bytes</i>
Shared management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal management agreements between museums and other stakeholders – groups and institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Committing to Place</i> • <i>Rhymes, One Rhythm</i> • <i>Future Harvest</i> • <i>A changing people, a changing land</i>
Stakeholder-based planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad multi-stakeholder-based planning for single issue decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>FATE</i>
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency consults public re plans, proposals so as to shape final project • Oral history projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>South Melbourne Oral History Project</i> • <i>Beirut to Baghdad</i>
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public informed but not consulted 	No example from list
Agency/ corporation management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house project/ exhibition development with external no contact 	No example from list

Table 7H: Selected museum project examples in relation to Ross et al.'s (2002) Stakeholder-based participatory approach.

Apart from the centrality of stakeholder identification and recognition, the other striking aspect of this model is the priority it assigns to project development process at the participatory level, and the point of community interaction. Thus I believe it has the capacity to be useful in the context of project planning, development implementation and review, and thus enhance the crucial dimension of participatory project stages.

7.3.3 Building participatory capacity in the Australian museum

industry: pitfalls and potential

It is evident from the discussion and tables in Section 7.2.2 that different types of museums in Australia have the capacity to develop and run substantial and innovative participatory projects. However, interviews with Australian museum workers revealed that there are a number of barriers that affect the pursuit of participatory practices in an in-house capacity.

These ranged from individual issues, such as a perceived loss of curatorial control and expertise, to institutional concerns, such as a lack of dedicated staff or the need to comply with performance indicators that are incompatible with the intangible nature of developing community and participatory projects. Most of these issues are inter-related, but is worth examining them separately at first in order to determine how they might best be addressed in the development of any engagement strategies and/ or policies.

Time management

Museum workers discussed the issue of the time needed to develop participatory practices as an excuse often used to avoid community participation (see Greene's quote in Chapter 4). Patrick Greene (08.03.2005. PhD Interview #15) also reflected on the impact the New Museology had made at a practical level, and suggested it has influenced museum practitioners substantially – particularly in terms of understanding audience learning:

Over the last decade there has been something of a revolution in museums from the "we know it all and will give it to you because it's good for you" to one where it is acknowledged that people who come through the door do not come through as empty vessels ... [but] with all sorts of knowledge and experience (Greene, 08.03.2005. PhD Interview #15).

Importantly, however, Greene's (08.03.2005. PhD Interview #15) reflections demonstrate the degree to which support of engagement projects is subjective and thus changeable. Thus, if we are to regard participatory practices as essential components of museum work, then there needs, I believe, to be a firmer framework and supporting policies via which practitioners can advocate for the development of such projects.

Martin Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13), former Deputy CEO at Museum Victoria, also addressed the issue of time during his interview for this thesis. He argued heavy staff workloads and the notion of curatorial "busyness" left little time for creative reflection. This was demonstrated during *Basin Bytes* when project manager Blackshaw acknowledged competing demands meant he responded to issues rather than pre-empted them. He understood the benefits of giving *Basin Bytes* project facilitators more of his time but recognised juggling multiple projects prevented him from that level of engagement:

I make these promises and I'll go back to my desk in two days time and I'll think god, I'm not going to be able to do that ... You think, it's only a five-minute phone call but it's not, it's a whole headspace. I've got to set aside a chunk of my day, read over what's happening, be in *Basin Bytes* 'mode'... so when I ring ... up I'm right on the ball, right on top of it for that period of time ... But it's just really difficult for me in terms of workload when this project is one amongst twenty-six that I'm able to give it the best amount of time it needs! (03.02.2004. NMA Public Programs Manager Interview).

The issue of time constraints is also pertinent for those working on consultancy projects – particularly when one considers the number of short-term consultancies and contracts within the museum and heritage field. The short-term/ consultancy structure lends itself, in many ways, to consultative rather than participatory processes. Pressured timelines and tight budgets often leave little room for the development of genuine participatory practices, and if the onus of developing the engagement rests with the consultant they are then bound by those constraints. Experienced heritage/museum consultant, Roslyn Russell, differentiated between consultation and participation, noting that:

Participation is trickier [than consultation]. You can open Pandora's Box in terms of setting agendas. If you allow participation, in a very democratic way, all your cherished views and plans could go out the window. Maybe that should happen ... [but] when you talk about time being factored into doing things if people want genuine participation then they have to give you a lot more time (Russell, 03.03.2005. PhD Interview #3).

Control and authority

The literature review and Section 7.2.2 acknowledged Schaffer-Bacon's (2002:13) observations that many curators saw collaboration as "infringing on curatorial autonomy". Although none of the interviewees stated they felt threatened by community involvement, there was recognition that it impacted (adversely at times) on planning and program development. Russell's (03.03.2005. PhD Interview #3) comments (above) acknowledge the impact that participation can have on planning and development. NMA curator, Matthew Higgins (01.07.2005. NMA Curator Interview) noted that outreach was more suitable for participatory projects than in-house exhibitions because of the more personal nature of the outreach project themes. NMA Director, Craddock Morton, also noted the centrality of objects and project themes to museum work, and that these determined the degree and appropriateness of participation:

At times, the nature of the task will be such that we will take a particular theme and we will run with and we will not have the space, the time or the objects to tell the multifaceted stories surround the incident that deserve to be told (Morton, 03.03.2005. PhD Interview #6).

Others were explicit about the fact that many practitioners were threatened by collaborative approaches but were personally enthusiastic about the idea.

The idea you are talking about is fabulous and absolutely right. It's a hard road ... and you're going to come up with some compromises and some people are going to be upset – you can't satisfy everybody ... It's an evolving process and it's the right way to go, but it threatens curatorial authority (Griffin, 04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8).

Matt Trinca (01.05.2003. PhD Interview #1) and Liza Dale-Hallett (07.03.2003. PhD Interview #2) equated the participatory process with communication skills and their personal learning and development by working closely with communities. Trinca (01.05.2003) noted:

I don't think that by opening up museums, by empowering people outside museums to be involved in making ideas in these places ... that that somehow subverts my practice as a curator. But a lot of people do. They think that it demolishes the idea that they have specialist knowledge or authority ...

What happens for me is that I feel extended by it and I feel that my conceptual work and my ideational life becomes more complex and richer for it. How can you say no to this – it's a fundamental issue about how you should operate with people and how you can make your institution relevant.

Efficiency and performance management

Efficiency is closely related to the idea of control; if one wants to be efficient having a sense of control is important. Scott (2002, 2003) argued that museum's performance and efficiency has been determined via managerial performance measurement tools that do not sufficiently reflect museum activity and achievements and which focus on quantitative as opposed to qualitative indicators – such as audience numbers as opposed to learning and engagement. Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13) discussed efficiency in the context of performance management during his interview, and related it closely to community process:

I think for some people there are many reasons that drive them not to be sympathetic to community issues. Typically these days we have key performance indicators to deliver on as part of our professional assessment processes, as part of our program assessment processes and as part of the institutional acquittal processes. Working with community is, to put it frankly, an inefficient process ... we don't have a lot of theory that guides the way we work with community, though there is a surprising amount we could adapt if we chose to.

Meaningful community process is open and therefore vulnerable to change. [But] if you are willing to risk initial inefficiency you can often get spectacularly innovative outcomes which subsequently payoff all investment and effort to go through that consultative, complex process.

The conditional nature of Hallett's comments demonstrated a pragmatic awareness that not every collaborative project is successful. However, if one takes the transformative

dimensions of participatory projects into account, one can argue that they still have great potential to enhance the learning outcomes and community capacity even if the associated museum doesn't get exactly what it was looking for.

Staff numbers and budget

A number of the interviewees specifically identified limited staff numbers in this area as an issue with regards outreach projects. Phil Gordon (05.03.2005. PhD Interview #11) noted that the Australian Museum has seen a reduction in the number of staff in the Aboriginal Heritage Unit, something that he believes illustrates a shift away from engagement and consultation and that it will impact on the level of service the Aboriginal Heritage Unit is able to provide. Outreach services managers, Rebecca Pinchin (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #9) (PHM) and Sarah Edwards (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #14) (MM) also noted the limited number of people available in a dedicated outreach capacity, while general manager at the NMA, Louise Douglas (03.03.2005. PhD Interview #4), stressed having a dedicated outreach service with intensive community engagement, particularly in relation to the NMA's other activities, was an affordability issue. Maisie Stapleton (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #7) also raised the important issue of local government taking a role in the provision of regional services. This is evidenced by the Museum Resource Centre Network in Queensland where museum development officers are part funded by local councils. The common factor among these approaches is the degree of isolation in which regional services and outreach workers operate.

Participants as audience, audience as participants

One of the difficult aspects of the interviewees was finding the correct terminology/phrasing to differentiate between participants in outreach projects and audiences. Hawkes' (2001) model of engagement with creative and managed *participation* and creative and managed *reception* helps to make a distinction between different types of engagement in cultural activities, and could be utilised in a museum context to make this understanding of audience, community and activity clearer. During each interview, I asked subjects to define their institution's audience and their community. I should also have asked about stakeholders as a discrete but influential group.

Audience researchers Lynda Kelly (05.03.2005. PhD Interview #12) (Australian Museum) and Scott (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8) (PHM) demonstrated the vast amount of research that has been undertaken in the Australian museum field in this area. Their comments showed that audience evaluation is an important element of participatory museum practice, one that utilises public opinion to respond to and reflect choices in institutional programming and development. Kelly (2002; 2005) argued that evaluation needs to be recognised within a theoretical framework and believes this would legitimise her findings and methods in a research context. Despite this assertion, many of the other interviewees noted the absence of formal evaluation processes in collaborative outreach projects in comparison to evaluation for in-house programs. There is an immediate sense, therefore, that there is a missed opportunity in terms of institutional learning, and thus development, in this area.

Trust and transparency

Programming and developing an understanding of institutional intent are areas of museum work that Scott (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8) identified as needing improvement. Such issues are at the heart of concerns I have raised in this dissertation – the need for clarity of purpose and a statement of (and sense of) intent when it comes to undertaking collaborative projects and community consultation. Scott reflected:

Sometimes we think we'll go and consult with the community. Well, why? What are our aims, what outcomes do we want from this and what outcomes might they want from it? What are the parameters, why? What will we allow and what will they allow? It's almost like formalising the process.

We, in museums, need to be clear what the brief is that we are taking into communities. I don't think we are all that clear and I think that's when you have problems. When people give us unnecessary information, information that is beyond our roles, when people have expectations that we don't fulfil and are then disappointed (Scott, 04.03.2005. PhD Interview #8).

This strong statement addresses key issues in the participatory agenda: trust and transparency. Why aren't museums more prepared to put their hands on the table and say that they want something, and/or that they have a purpose and agenda for their engagement projects, whether it be collecting, learning or exhibiting? There is nothing duplicitous about this; indeed, I argue it adds a degree of transparency to the participatory process that is currently seen as somewhat murky and turbid. It might be that the genuine dimensions of participation do not exist within a project, however, like Scott (04.03.2005. PhD Interview

#8) and Gordon (05.03.2005. PhD Interview #12), I argue it is better to be upfront about one's goals and anticipated project development in order to build trust and develop relationships.

Engagement skills

The last area to consider in this section is museum workers' engagement skills. This issue reflects issues of control and authority because it requires museum workers to examine their own skills and training and ask if they have the capacity to undertake complex engagement projects whether they can entrust responsibility for this to another party.

Both Stapleton (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #7) and Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13) identified the focus on objects, particularly in the larger museums, as opposed to issues, themes and learning, as a barrier to engagement. They highlighted the need for museum workers to be more rigorous in their critical reflection about museum practice. Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13) argued that there was little time to do this for many working in state museums because of time pressures, programming and what he identified as the "busyness" phenomenon. Stapleton (04.03.2005. PhD Interview #7) suggested that there was insufficient incentive for museum workers to keep up-to-date with museum theory and that many worked within their disciplinary specialty without recognising the impact and development of museology. She identified CCD approaches to museum work as an emerging trend in smaller institutions, one that echoes Blackshaw's approach and philosophy to developing *Basin Bytes*. According to Hallett (07.03.2005. PhD Interview #13), however, the present focus on collection management training rather than interpretative development has meant those working in museums are lacking creative engagement skills:

If you look at Museums Australia's training programs you'll find dozens of cataloguing your collection programs or working with collections programs. There are a much smaller number of programs that are about engaging with community or working with local government – processes for working with the layers of the community. In fact, it seems to me that the failure has been for curatorial expertise in museums to provide leadership in the sector to encourage thinking in a creative manner.

This suggests there is a need for more preparation and development of engagement skills when developing community-based project. I argue, therefore, that consideration of these issues when developing participatory projects has the potential to demystify and make the

participatory process more straightforward. A participatory paradigm and framework that identifies creative engagement as an important skill will, therefore, result in a more participatory approach to project development.

are valuable for the aesthetic quality of material they produced, the content of each story, the level of completion of the database field, the depth of material on the website, their ability to address NRM issues, or their ability to contribute to community empowerment? These questions demonstrate the need for interaction, good communication, and an appreciation of the setting in which the project is being run. *Echuca Basin Bytes*, for example, experienced substantial problems in its implementation and with the technology. Further, many of the participants were school children and their interpretation of the place-based project themes differed slightly to those originally identified by the project developers. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participants were critical of the Echuca material and it reflected a lack of participant interest in the project and subject (*Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004). What was not clear from the website, however, was the fact that many of the Echuca participants suffered from a lack of self esteem which affected their capacity to participate. On the basis of this, one could argue that the types of images and stories on the site are a tribute to the work and encouragement that Paul Gamble contributed in his role as facilitator. In this respect, the project could be seen as a great success; indeed, the fact that some participants took photos and that a website eventuated is in fact a success story itself.

The evaluation research identified a range of issues that affected both the participatory aspects of each project and project delivery. This focus on different stakeholder needs shows the importance of having an understanding of the broader participatory picture. Thus, who is participating, in what, why, how and when are all crucial questions in developing a fuller picture of how to develop participatory projects. The following subsections reflect participatory issues applicable across the *Basin Bytes* project.

7.4.1 Integrating evaluation into project development

The evaluation research conducted throughout the *Basin Bytes* project demonstrated the value of integrating evaluation into the project development phase. Not only did it lead to significant improvements in subsequent projects, it brought the project developers into more contact with the community and gave them an opportunity to address problems that arose immediately rather than when the project finished. In particular, improvements were made in terms of the role of facilitators, the use of ICT, and the content of the workshops.

By working in a collaborative and continuous capacity, the evaluation provided researchers and museum staff with data that informed broader research questions about museums, participation and environmental engagement. It clearly identified the process of project implementation as crucial to the development of material for participatory web galleries. Further, it highlighted the need to understand project participants' experiences in a similar context to museum visitor experiences. The project's ability to influence community capacity and inspire participation in future projects relied on clearly identifying both institutional and community needs and then meeting expectations.

It is important to note, however, that this research was conducted in an adjunct manner – the CTP evaluation research was funded externally.³ Thus, we need to reflect on how such research can be integrated into museum practice within existing management structures. The ongoing nature of the evaluation highlighted the potential for traditional curatorial roles to merge with those of evaluators and project facilitators. With Higgins and Blackshaw attending the initial project meetings for *Goolwa and Toowoomba Basin Bytes*, there was less need for an evaluator to be present – a briefing on what to look for and how to run the evaluation research would have probably been sufficient in the first instance. Although this approach blurs the boundaries between traditional curatorial and evaluation roles, it highlights the need for museum staff to have a range of diverse skills when undertaking projects which comprise community engagement. To reiterate, community engagement does not come naturally to many curators or museum staff. It is a skill that is acquired over time and one that needs to be valued more highly by the museum profession.

7.4.2 The need for managerial and institution support

Basin Bytes was integrated into the CTP project at an NMA level, and had the support of various NMA managers, but was, ultimately managed by Blackshaw in the Public Programs Division. Project developer evaluation interviews throughout this research identified heavy workloads as an ongoing issue (Blackshaw, 03.02.2004). Thus Blackshaw was only able to devote a certain amount of managerial time to the project which was not

³ Blackshaw found the evaluation for *Echuca Basin Bytes* and *Wentworth Basin Bytes*, however, that he integrated evaluation into the project budget for *Goolwa and Toowoomba Basin Bytes*.

sufficient to successfully enhance and develop ongoing relationships with participant communities. Blackshaw also noted that without the ongoing evaluation, problems that arose during the project may not have been identified or addressed and thus could have potentially damaged relationships between the NMA and the partner community:

the role that you've played has been ... really, really beneficial. You mightn't think it's a lot but it actually has been a lot. I'll be doing something at the my desk, answering phones, someone tapping me on the shoulder, something else, then an email will come up from you about *Basin Bytes* and I'll open that immediately. Sometimes, the only thing that has kept me ticking away with it is these emails you've been sending through (Blackshaw, 2004. NMA Public Project Manager Interview, 03.02.2004).

Echuca Basin Bytes, for example, was not successful in terms of enhanced community relationships. This was partly because the project facilitator was working in an independent capacity. Further, limited backing from the local Council and problems with the technology and delays also affected the ability of the NMA to enhance relationships. *Goolwa and Toowoomba Basin Bytes* also represented problems at managerial level when communication broke down with Toowoomba-based facilitators. Ironically, this also reflected competing workloads for project facilitators, and also reflects the uncertainty of temporary contract work (Stark, 07.12.2004). Frustrating and potentially disastrous in terms of project completion, the major impact of this was that project participants were left in limbo, and thus became disengaged with the project and process.

At a more practical, but nonetheless crucial, level, support from other departments within institutions is required to ensure projects are ready for delivery. This includes communications and technology divisions, but also includes accounts departments and paying contractual workers on time.

7.4.3 The need for clear selection process

Overall, the community and participant selection process for each of the three projects could not be regarded as participatory. Selection processes for both the generic community and individual participants needed to be clarified in the majority of projects. In the first instance, place-based communities were identified. Selecting a community on place, location (or indeed on any one characteristic) must take into consideration the need for community connections, and preliminary research and networking prior to implementing the project itself. Such research needs to include face-to-face consultations, background

reading and an understanding of the community profile and key players. Echuca was identified as a convenient link to another NMA project, the local council contacted local schools to generate their support and they then picked students they deemed appropriate for the project. Goolwa and Toowoomba were actively pursued as project venues by NMA staff on the basis of their location within the Murray-Darling Basin. Participants in this third project were hand selected by the facilitators in both regions, thus rendering the self-selecting process non-existent. Only *Wentworth Basin Bytes* came close to being a self-selecting community. However, one must consider this in the context of the CTP research and conference presentations which, effectively, advertised the project within the region and inspired a motivated local arts worker – James Giddey.

For the project to have been more participatory, the communities needed to be able to negotiate with the NMA at the outset of project development. As there was limited publicity about the project itself, this made it hard for communities to approach the NMA to express interest in developing a discussion from the outset. Thus, from an idealistic perspective, museums must be willing to respond to (rather than instigate) expressions of interest in project development. Clearly, this can not be the only methodology – museums need to be proactive in terms of their own planning, budgetary allocation and development. However, a project with clear parameters that is promoted via a range of relevant networks would help generate different types of community involvement.

Participant selection in each of the projects was affected by a predetermined approach to community selection. Figure 7.6 illustrates the different selection methods used for participants in each of the projects. It is noticeable that participants in *Echuca Basin Bytes* and *Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes* came from one or maybe two major groups whereas participants in *Wentworth Basin Bytes* came from more diverse fields:

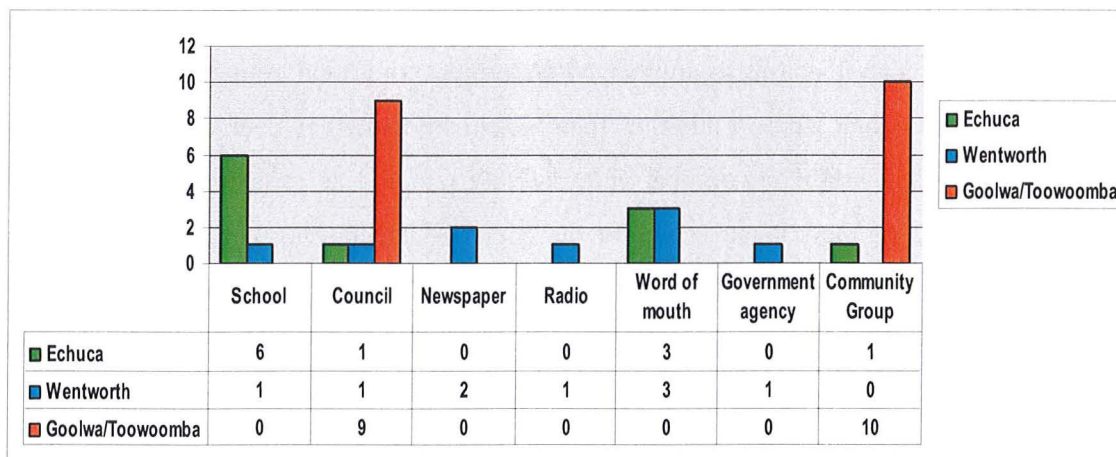


Figure 7.6: Participant engagement in Basin Bytes projects.

Thus, more consideration to the selection of participant communities is required and would give different communities a chance to contribute to the development of projects that suited their needs. Participants in Wentworth, for example, were self-selecting and, in some respects, more dynamic because they had chosen to participate from the outset.

7.4.4 Understanding participant expectations, motivations and learning

Basin Bytes' participants differed in each location in relation to age, interest, experience, and, importantly, motivation. In terms of participant learning, all three projects were at once successful and unsuccessful. It was important to understand what peoples' expectations of the project were and this was done largely through the formal evaluation interviews and informal discussions during fieldwork. It was clear that for Echuca participants, the major drawcard was the technology, and that they hoped to use this creatively to address the project theme. Although technology was important to a number of the Wentworth and Goolwa participants, the principal interest was the opportunity to address environmental issues and be able to present their ideas to a broad web-based community. A number of the older people derived particular satisfaction from mastering the digital technology and thus improved their technical capacity during the course of their participation.

Most participants were interested in the photographic medium, but older participants showed more commitment to filling in the database fields and creating a story. This was particularly the case in Echuca – completing the database and writing stories was less engaging for most of the participants. Thus a breakdown of participants in relation to age underpins preliminary observations about the different sorts of content that each project generated (see Figure 7.7).

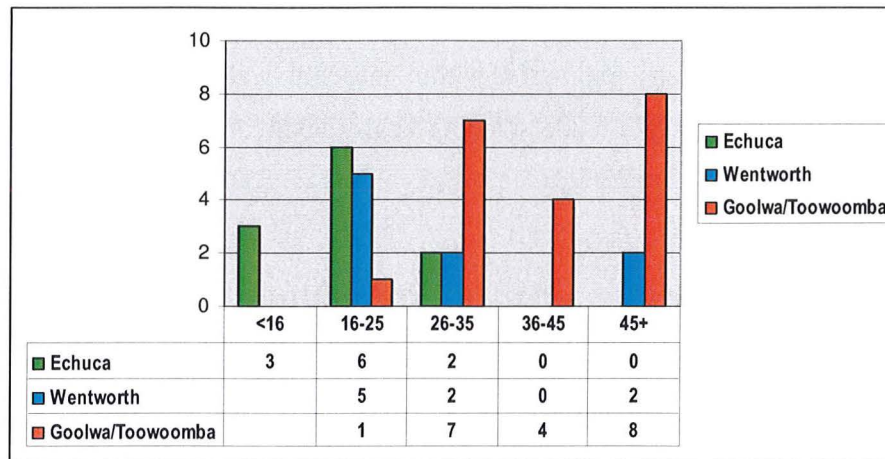


Figure 7.7: *Basin Bytes* projects: breakdown of participants age groups.

Although the age differences suggest age is the primary reason for this, the qualitative evidence also shows that technical and database difficulties plagued the *Echuca Basin Bytes* project. This created a major barrier for participants completing the story fields and uploading material, and contributed to participant frustration and disengagement. *Wentworth Basin Bytes* participants were generally self selecting and many had an active interest in the NRM theme. Their motivation for completing the project components, as well as their ability to complete their work via functioning technology, illustrates the importance of project elements working collaboratively. The final physical exhibition was particularly motivating for these participants. *Goolwa and Toowoomba Basin Bytes* participants were selected on the basis of their interest in the topic and ability to present different perspectives on environmental issues in their areas. Their motivations for participating were not so much to learn something, as to use the project to encourage other community members to participate in environmental activities. Their experience of NRM issues therefore was significant in terms of the material they produced and the questions they tackled.

Thus a simple comparison between the projects in terms of outcomes is not sufficient to understand the relative impact of the project within the communities, for the specific participants or even within the NMA. In some respects, this means that projects themselves need to be analysed and interpreted using constructivist principles. Participants' prior knowledge and experiences had an impact on the way they participated and engaged with ideas and the project. While many museums have embraced the notion of constructivist learning in terms of programs delivered within museum walls, the experiences of this project show that this theoretical understanding is also applicable to outreach projects and participants.

7.4.5 Methodology: photography and storytelling

As noted throughout this thesis, research in a variety of disciplines highlights regional communities' interest in storytelling and photography (Lane, 1997; Lucas, 2004; McKinnon, 2002, 2006; Moore, 2000; Roberts & Sainty, 1996; Voisey et al., 1998; Wang, 1998; Wills, 2004; Wu et al., 1995). Images and stories created and collected in the process of the *Basin Bytes* projects have given the NMA both an interpreted collection and a range of stories. However, the significance of this material and the way it is going to be incorporated into the collection requires further development. It also raises the critical issue of digital collection policies for the NMA. Will this material, for example, be registered as a collection or on an individual basis? How does one assess the significance of this material, and does its project specific origin alter the criteria against which significance should be assessed?

There is potential for the strong visual element that is part of any photography project to override material produced by less artistic participants. As the project also includes storytelling and documentation, however, perhaps making more room for these elements on the website could enhance the participants' experiences and lessen the pressure for participants' to produce aesthetically pleasing images above all else. Photography, and indeed other forms of art, is a trigger for people to be involved in projects. By offering participants the chance to engage with, or learn how to operate, new equipment is an incentive and opportunity. This sense of the photographic medium being a stimulus for

participation was identified in the *Basin Bytes Evaluation Report* (Wills, 2004b) after the first two projects. It is clear that photography gives participants a medium through which they can express and communicate issues relating to their sense of place and their connection to their environment. Photography could be replaced by painting, music, stories or a range of other arts based media in a participatory capacity, but the use of these mediums would need to be tested with specific communities. What made photography so appropriate in a museum context is its ability to feed directly into collection material and project outputs. However, compiling intangible cultural heritage relating to this topic has the potential to spark community interest. The use of photography also opened parameters for different types of social interaction and engagement. This meant the NMA could tap into intangible cultural heritage and extend their learning about NRM issues at the same time as they were stimulating community interest in the topic.

The photovoice methodology used by practitioners such as Wang et al. (1997) in the community health and community development fields use photography as a trigger for engagement and expression, and the *Basin Bytes* projects can be seen very much in this context (Wills et al. 2004c). Some participants manipulated images to show links between NRM activities, human impact and place attachment. Figure 7.8, for example, shows two examples of digital manipulation to enhance either photographic impact or show links between activities.

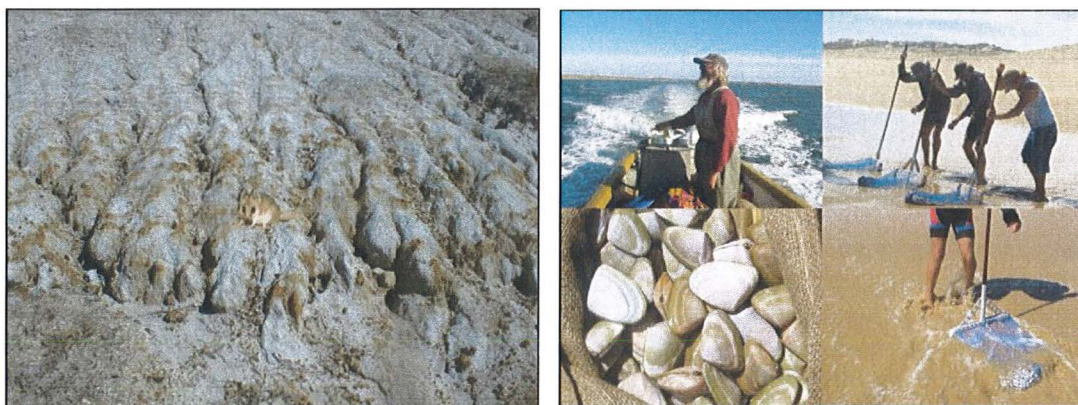


Figure 7.8: Manipulated images in two *Basin Bytes* projects.

Other participants used the photographic medium to challenge viewers and convey different perspective of landscape and NRM issues – in these instances, through humour, aesthetics or perspective (see Figure 7.9).



Figure 7.9: *Basin Bytes* images: humour, aesthetics, creativity and perspective.

Of interest too, are the types of stories developed by participants. We can see that the stories told by older participants often have more of a narrative structure to them. For instance, a number of the Wentworth participants linked their images to create an overall topic rather than have stand alone images. One participant structured her web pages around her dogs in an attempt to link recreational land use with NRM issues. Another built up a story of land use by developing small vignettes about different landowners in a particular area. This was partly replicated, to a degree, in Goolwa and Toowoomba. One participant in Goolwa developed a progressive story about the dredging at the Murray Mouth, and another created a narrative along the length of the Murray-Darling river system in order to convey a sense of connection. What became clear from both these projects, and two of the contributions from older participants in Echuca, is that older participants were more prepared to directly convey doubts or muse about contentious issues in their pieces. Some, for instance, posed questions about memory itself and the integration of personal and public heritage:

Is a bridge still a bridge if it you can't see to cross it? How real is a memory you can't quite remember?
(Echuca *Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2004: website).

This bridge was a part of my journey of life; everyday I passed over the Anabranche Bridge, the Wentworth Bridge and the Tuckers Creek Bridge to get to and from school. Out of those three, I paid the least amount of attention to Tuckers During this project I found it strange that there was little information on the time of the construction of this bridge. It is an important crossing needed to get to Mildura (Wentworth *Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2004: website).

Others used their stories to pose more direct questions about NRM issues:

Why carve your name into a tree or shoot at signage or leave your rubbish and broken glass? Nobody wants to inherit a garbage dump (*Echuca Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2004: website).

Will the environment and the other stakeholders be done a favour by drying up the Anabranche and pipelining it? (*Wentworth Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2004: website).

Did you know? For the past 4 years Lakes and Coorong fishers have donated their time, boats and navigational expertise to take part in the annual summer wader survey (*Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2006: website).

The Southern Ocean is suffering environmentally, with marine biodiversity suffering. Are land based activities having impacts on the seas? (*Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2006: website).

The volcanic activity of the range has provided us with an abundance of basalt for building purposes. What isn't so fortunate is the humungous scar that quarrying leaves prominently displayed on the escarpment. The rock face in this picture is at the now defunct (1994) Bridge St quarry. Is the local council plan to establish an international garden concept here, just replacing one scar with another? (*Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes*, NMA, 2006: website).

7.4.6 Exploring participants' sense of place

A review of the information produced during each project shows that individuals and communities express their sense of place differently. The variables within this expression require more detailed consideration. Place, for example, can be experienced from a socio-cultural, emotional, physical, environmental or economic perspective. It is a topic that is expansive enough to enable interpretive flexibility but can also be seen as such a broad topic that it is difficult to focus on. For participatory projects it is important not to develop projects that are too expansive as to become unrelated. The evaluation showed that participants liked to have a general topic rather than chose their own, but that they were not keen to be given strict parameters. A thematic approach is a useful way of catering for these needs. However, themes need to be identified in a collaborative atmosphere rather than imposed prior to the project commencing in order for the project to be truly participatory. Figures 7.10 compares the themes developed for each project:

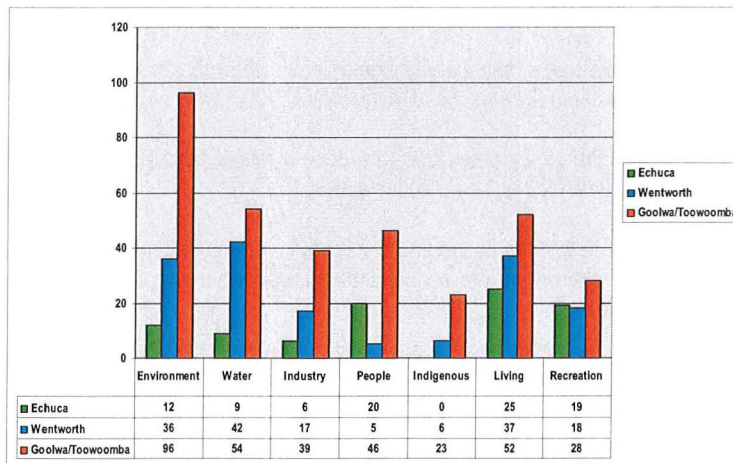


Figure 7.10: *Basin Bytes* projects compared by theme.

When one reflects on the relatedness of the images and stories to NRM issues, such as environment and water, one is particularly struck by the relevance and quality of material generated by *Basin Bytes Wentworth* and *Basin Bytes Goolwa-Toowoomba* (in this instance, Goolwa) – although environment and water stand out as significant themes in all three projects. The Wentworth and Goolwa-Toowoomba projects, however, were geared specifically towards the NRM topic from the outset. Facilitators with NRM experience and backgrounds were appointed and this meant that the participants were given more particular project parameters that focused on the environment. Further, it is interesting to note that representation of people was not as prevalent in Wentworth (or, a closer analysis of results shows, in Toowoomba). This is perhaps because both of these groups were strongly focused on NRM as the major issue whereas the communities in Echuca and Goolwa were approaching the project from more of a community perspective. Another interesting finding is the difference in the quantity of material that addresses Indigenous issues. Given that facilitators in Goolwa-Toowoomba specifically allocated the Indigenous theme to one of the participants, however, the larger percentage of Indigenous images does not necessarily represent those participants' greater engagement with Indigenous issues.

7.4.7 Contributing to contemporary issues

On the basis of the above section, and from the material produced in all projects, there is strong evidence that NRM and cultural heritage projects can work successfully to explore participants' sense of place and promote discussion and consideration of contemporary

environmental issues. At a macro level, one can argue that the opportunity to discuss topical issues also gives participants the sense that they are contributing to a contemporary debate. This process in itself is a form of engagement, and reflects the idea of participation being a layered process. For people to be involved in any discussion, however, they must be cognisant of or able to acquire knowledge about the issues.

7.4.8 Digital technology in community outreach projects

Basin Bytes enabled the NMA to explore the outreach potential for ICT tools and each project has resulted in material that can be moulded into an online exhibition. These exhibitions, however, are not particularly interactive. This lack of interactivity was noted by the participants, particularly those in Wentworth who benefited from seeing the Echuca site whilst engaged on the project. Blackshaw attempted to address this issue in the Goolwa-Toowoomba project by proposing to develop interactive videos with students from University of Canberra. However negotiations for this fell through. Other attempts to develop a more engaging and interactive site were sidelined due to budgetary restrictions.

In a specific attempt to address recommendations from the *Basin Bytes* Evaluation Report (Wills, 2004b), Blackshaw held a workshop during the middle of *Basin Bytes* Goolwa-Toowoomba to discuss options for presenting the material online. With a limited budget and tight timelines in mind, the group decided to adopt a thematic presentation style as well as access to information about the participants. However, the format of the website still makes it difficult to search through the material – in the environment themes there are just too many images for visitors to view. A searchable database would have allowed visitors to access the material more quickly. Further, a more dynamic interface and display page would allow participants to express their ideas in a more individual and creative context.

Despite these negative comments, participants and project developers alike were genuinely interested in the technology used to develop these projects. However, mediating this with ongoing contact, facilitation and a physical link to the museum is important. Thus as a means of communication, the project's digital status can not be said to have promoted more effective communication. Research identified the need for technology and logistics to be firmly in place and reliable before a project commences so as to enhance interest and

engagement. It is evident that problems with technology and equipment significantly impeded participation and enjoyment of the project. This means technology not working in an outreach capacity is as problematic as an interactive not working within the museum. If the museum does not have a fieldwork presence, it is easy for it to be a scapegoat if aspects of the project go awry. Thus, while ICT can enhance projects and offer opportunities, it is clear that communication and face-to face contact is still an important aspect of community outreach.

7.4.9 Being there: the importance of face-to-face communication

The material produced by each project demonstrates the value of running regional outreach projects and the interest in regions to engage in digital storytelling and photography. However, ongoing contact, facilitation and a physical link to the museum is important. While ICT can enhance projects and offer opportunities, it is clear that communication and face-to face contact is still an important aspect of community outreach. Therefore, projects developed in this context needs ensure there are opportunities for face-to-face communication between a museum staff member and key community based facilitators throughout the project.

The evaluation research was an interface for the NMA in the field. As noted above, Blackshaw recognized the importance of having the evaluator travel to various meetings and report back on findings. Facilitators also noted this was important for their activities, while participants felt it underscored institutional interest in the project because they were did not make a clear distinction between the NMA and my work with the CTP team. We must ask, therefore, how successful would these projects have been without the ongoing contact each had with me as the evaluator. *Basin Bytes Goolwa-Toowoomba* was more revealing at this level because distance and budget restrictions meant I could not regularly visit each community. Problems with project completion in Toowoomba were as much a communication breakdown as anything and so it is worth speculating as to whether or not greater liaison would have helped prevented the stalemate that delayed the project launch.

7.4.10 Sustaining participant engagement

Most participants noted they would like to do the project again, and a number identified a ways to improve the project. They focused, particularly on the importance of workshops and collaboration, more project information, and more diversity and interactivity for the online gallery. For many, the physical exhibition at the end of the project was an incentive to complete the project. This kept them in touch with the project goals, particularly in Wentworth where participants actively engaged in printing their images and choosing the frames for the physical exhibition. Thus, the final event acted as an incentive.

Basin Bytes was a finite project, however, and its ability to actively sustain participant learning beyond the project life was limited. Many participants in Echuca and Wentworth acknowledged their interest in participating in future versions of the project or hoped that others would have the opportunity to do so (*Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004; Picone, 2003. Audio Journal Transcript, 10.12.2003). Further, a number of older participants who had not used digital cameras before noted they would use them in the future and that they were more confident in using web-based technologies (*Wentworth Basin Bytes* Focus Group interview, 23.05.2004). This was also noted in Goolwa (Jones, 24.11.2005. *Pers. Comm.*).

7.4.11 Exit strategies

There is a need for a fully articulated exit strategy when working with communities. In terms of ongoing relationships, museums need to reflect on the ways of maintaining interest and engagement. This may not necessarily be through specific projects but could be in an advisory capacity. Managing stakeholder expectations can contribute to good project closure and is also a good way of creating new beginnings.

Both participants and facilitators needed a sense of completion. For example, a local launch is a symbolic recognition of closure and accomplishment. In Wentworth, the display at the Visitor Centre, combined with a focus group in the final workshop gave the participants a good sense of closure even though there was no formal exhibition launch. The Goolwa launch in the Alexandrina Shire Offices fulfilled a similar function, as did the Toowoomba

exhibition in the Cobb & Co Museum. In Echuca, however, the sense of closure was inadequate for many of the participants, particularly those that did not attend the launch. For the facilitators, however, the NMA also needs to incorporate a form of closure via a formal debrief session.

7.4.12 Sustaining stakeholder learning beyond the project

As noted above, with the finite nature of the project it is hard to identify participant learning beyond the project itself. A number identified the purchase of digital cameras as an immediate outcome, and thus we can speculate that more photographic work has occurred. In Wentworth, for example, one participant used the technique to help prepare for an exhibition. In all instances, learning beyond the project was participant driven and this suggests the project had an impact in a broader context.

There have been opportunities for stakeholder learning and engagement after the projects finished. Wentworth Shire Council, for example, hosted a further showing of the physical exhibition during History Week. Regional Development Officer, James Giddey, mused about taking the project to other communities up the Darling River. He was also keen to run a *Broken Hill Basin Bytes* but this idea did not fulfil the NMA criteria for running projects in the Murray-Darling Basin's representative states. Goolwa's facilitator, David Cooney, liaised with Blackshaw about running a range of different projects in relation to water use in the wine industry after the completion of *Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes*.

One of the major avenues for ongoing stakeholder learning, however, is within the NMA itself. Greater recognition of the project offers the potential for more departmental collaboration. Higgins and Blackshaw, for example, worked effectively to provide managerial support and curatorial guidelines for *Goolwa-Toowoomba Basin Bytes*. A senior curator visiting regional communities and helping develop a participatory project bodes well for future participatory projects. However, Blackshaw noted that the NMA does not engage in internal dissemination of project findings and processes because staff have heavy workloads. This is a lost opportunity in terms of promoting the project benefits, results and achievements as well as regards promoting staff learning about engagement techniques and approaches.

7.5 A participatory spectrum for Australian museums

This chapter has discussed the research findings in relation to the primary research question to examine why museum community outreach projects have not engaged more fully with participatory practices. It has sought to analyse issues within the Australian museum industry, at both a professional and individual level, that prevent a more complex integration of participatory principles into the museum arena. There is clearly a lack of policy to directly address engagement issues – an interesting omission given that other issues, such as cultural diversity, are addressed more fully within the sector. With engagement and participation at such a premium in the government arena, the Australia museum sectors' lack of formal acknowledgement of these issues via policy or training is an oversight that needs to be addressed.

In addition to the minimal recognition of participation and engagement at a policy level, there still appears to be tacit apprehension when it comes to developing participatory projects. This is primarily because community engagement-related participatory processes are seen more as having to give up project control rather than working collaboratively to achieve outcomes for all parties involved. While access, learning, diversity and inclusion are all acknowledged as important principles, their application to the development of programs is somewhat problematic because there is not a clear understanding of what it is exactly they entail. The analysis of participatory principles in other models and disciplines provides some more tangible words and approaches to address this. Connectedness, trustworthiness, substance, reciprocity, representativeness and inclusiveness allow a more complex understanding of the principles involved in participatory practice. Further, methodologies that clearly communicate participation goals and articulate public outcomes can be applied and pursued via various types of museum programs, as demonstrated by the application of the IAP2 (2000) participatory spectrum in Table 7.7. Developing a more complex understanding of stakeholders, as Ross et al. (2002) suggest, also gives museums a greater chance of success when it comes to developing participatory projects.

The examples used throughout this chapter reiterate the argument made at the close of the previous chapter, that while museums are usually the instigators of projects they need to be

prepared to compromise, negotiate and collaborate with communities regarding project parameters. This process leads to transformative learning opportunities for which participants and institutions alike can take responsibility and ownership. *Basin Bytes* is a primarily example of this type of project, and the participatory dimensions analysed in section 7.4 are the basis for developing a museum-specific participatory spectrum and methodology that forms the research outcome of this thesis and, thus its conclusion. In the context of providing this participatory spectrum, the concluding chapter therefore responds to some of the criticisms raised regarding participatory projects and returns to consider this thesis' research aims and objectives.

CHAPTER 8

*Museums, communities and participation:
the rationale, principles, guidelines and framework.*

8.1 The participatory potential of museum outreach projects

I began this research by asking why Australian museums do not engage more fully with participatory practices when they develop outreach projects, and sought to identify whether or not this question was valid in relation to the museum studies literature. On the basis of these investigations, and on research into the way other disciplines integrate participatory practices, this thesis has argued that Australian museums, especially the National Museum of Australia (NMA) and larger state museums, would benefit from having a more clearly articulated engagement policy for developing participatory museum projects. In doing so, I acknowledge that the pursuit of participatory projects' intangible benefits (such as transformative learning and capacity building) is a challenging, and often time-consuming, task. This challenge is particularly evident when one considers the different definitions and various manifestations of the terms "participation" and "engagement" that are currently embedded within the museum industry (Chapter 2). It is also complicated by the multiple definitions that different discourses have for the term "community", and by the fact that community characteristics differ from context to context (Chapters 2, 4, and 6). The topic is further complicated because it is evident that different types of museums have different resources at their disposal to undertake these resource-hungry activities (Chapter 4, 5, 6). Thus, institutional size, budget and available human resources (and expertise) directly influence an institution's capacity to deliver participatory projects. With this myriad of complications attached to the process, it is clear that for institutions to deftly adopt such practices they must be fully committed to and cognisant of the issues involved, particularly in a financial and social environment that is dominated by deadlines, performance measures and government policy objectives.

Such challenges, however, do not diminish the need for or benefits of participatory projects in a museum context. Rather, they reinforce the need to explore the participatory potential for museums in greater depth. Finding accessible, ethical and realistic methods to do this, thus, becomes the major purpose of this concluding chapter. In doing so, this fulfils the major research objective that was outlined in the introduction: to create a museum-specific participatory spectrum, and accompanying set of guiding principles appropriate for museum-based community engagement. The research has demonstrated that the

development of an accompanying set of values, principles and processes are pivotal to such a spectrum's success. This finding, and the ensuing product, deviates slightly from the intentions set out in the introductory chapter. However, this critical reassessment and reflection demonstrates a greater understanding of the processes required to integrate participatory practices within the Australian museum sector. It also means that this research, which started out with a series of questions, concludes with a fresh set of questions and research objectives.

This concluding chapter, therefore, contains three main sections. Section 8.2 uses the theoretical and practical research findings from this research to answer key questions about integrating participatory and community engagement processes into museum policy. These answers consider issues and concerns in relation to the theoretical and contextual framework, and aims to establish credibility for participatory practice within the museum milieu. Section 8.3 presents a museum-specific participatory spectrum including principles, guideless and examples. This suite of materials aims to guide museum managers and workers as they develop participatory policies, practices and projects. By providing guidelines as to how to integrate these processes, the spectrum aims to demystify and clarify the concept of participation and community engagement, make it achievable, and allow it to evolve. The spectrum illustrates how understanding the different degrees of participatory practice can help museums and their stakeholders benefit more fully from participatory projects. The final section of this thesis, Section 8.4, reasserts the importance of three key methodologies that form the basis of this museum-specific spectrum – action research, clear communication, and on-going, critical evaluation.

8.2 Establishing credibility for participatory practices in museums

Designing any framework as a platform for institutional or professional change necessitates understanding the dimensions of the proposal and the ability to address issues and queries that such a change inevitably provokes. If museums are to be encouraged to think creatively and positively about participatory projects and practices, they need an informed framework from which to begin such thinking. Designers and supporters of such a framework, therefore, must be equipped with answers underpinned by theory and/or examples in order for the discussion to be credible and be taken seriously.

8.2.1 Key questions about museums, participatory practices and community engagement

A key outcome of this research is that it provides informed responses to concerns that institutions have when the subject of community participation or engagement is raised. These concerns have been addressed theoretically and in an interdisciplinary capacity in the literature review (Chapter 2), practically and contextually through the fieldwork (Chapter 4, 5 and 6) and re-examined in the analysis contained in Chapter 7. Being able to clearly articulate a rationale for the benefits of participatory practices, therefore, is a crucial step towards developing a common understanding of what participation means and can mean for the museum industry.

1. What are the benefits of participatory practices for museums?

Museums that integrate participatory processes can benefit tangibly and intangibly from participation practices. Collections management has the potential to improve and evolve, outreach programs are likely to be more relevant and utilised, more people may visit a museum, a more detailed understanding of collections, visitor interests and contemporary life may ensue. Engaged communities may translate into improved community relations between museums and the public, participants may experience a sense of belonging and inclusion, or transformative learning may occur when those involved in activities are introduced to new ideas and experiences.

Participatory practices make museums more accessible and transparent, and therefore have the potential to reach a wider range of people and communities. The introduction to this thesis argued that one of the challenges for museums is to be financially viable and socially relevant. Institutional relevance, discussed at length by a range of museologists (Archibald, 2004; Hein, 2000; Hirzy, 2002; Sandell, 1998; Scott, 2002, 2003, 2004; Weil, 2002), is one of the key outcomes that could emerge if museums adopted and applied a more rigorous approach to participatory practices.⁴

The benefits of participatory practices are dependent on museums acknowledging that they need them. A more participatory approach to project development and delivery can bring benefits to a range of traditional museum practices. Projects can help museums:

- develop a better understanding of museum audiences and constituent communities (audience and visitor research)
- monitor contemporary issues and concerns (audience and visitor research)
- document and collect contemporary life, particularly for social history museums and historical societies (collections and research, exhibitions)
- develop an additional layer of curatorial and collections-based knowledge (collections and research, exhibitions, outreach)
- expand professional development for staff and the associated benefits this brings to the organisation (human resources; collections and research)
- remain current and in touch with contemporary learning needs (education and learning)
- develop conservation and interpretation training for volunteers and supporting the broader cultural industry (collections management, exhibitions, outreach)
- make connections with geographically, socially and culturally diverse communities (outreach)
- establish museum's role as a safe environment in which to learn and explore community identity and belonging (collections and research, outreach)
- maintain institutional sustainability, accessibility and social relevance (museum management)

⁴ Chapter 2 and 4 provide museums with a theoretical and historical rationale for developing new approaches to their projects and programs, while Chapter 5 and 6 provide examples of how such programs can be pursued and improved.

For those non-museum participants, the benefits of such activities are varied and dependent upon individual needs, capacity, time and expectations. Projects can:

- increase self esteem or a sense of achievement
- provide an opportunity to meet like-minded and different people
- open new horizons and expanding knowledge and understanding
- provide participants with additional skills and training
- provide participants with a tangible product for portfolios

An important question that emerges from these lists of potential benefits is whether or not museums will measure and evaluate the success of participatory programs using appropriate evaluation methods, as discussed in Chapters 3, 5 and 6. This process, in itself, is pivotal to assessing the impact participatory programs can have. It requires museum professionals to expand their understanding and practice of measuring and evaluation. Adding this layer to research processes will be time consuming, and require many workers to retrain. However the resulting qualitative research data will provide museums with a much clearer picture of their impact and support their constituent communities.

2. Are there any precedents for participatory approaches within the Australian museum industry?

There are a number of models, however, none have been widely recognised, tested or adapted into policy. This is due to industry not recognising the need to formalise this aspect of museum work, and because the models have not been effective. Marginson's (1993) Australian model, for instance, did not take into account the broad spectrum of museum work, particularly museum outreach. It also failed to integrate and articulate the concepts of inclusion and learning as part of a participatory process, focussing instead on the project outcome.

Further, Marginson's (1993) model adopted a linear approach to museum project development and management in a manner reminiscent of Arnstein's (1969) influential ladder of participation. Arnstein's (1969) ladder provided an applied participatory

framework, contextualised it in relation to a particular industry (public planning) and provided a transparent checklist (albeit somewhat rigid and hierarchical) when it came to developing and assessing the relevance of community engagement. Marginson's (1993) model, however, did not receive such attention or integration, nor did it make an impact within the Australian museum industry.

More contemporary attempts at integrating museums with engagement discourse have occurred in Britain (Dodd & Sandell, 2001; Sandell 1998, 2002) and in America (American Association of Museums', 2002a; 2002b). In Britain, much of this work has emerged from the social inclusion policies implemented at a government level (Sandell, 1998; Selwood 2002, 2004). Another relevant development is the American Association of Museums' (2002a; 2002b) *Museums and Community Engagement Initiative* which sought to question the industry's relationships with its constituent communities. Although it encouraged museum workers to think about their approach to community engagement, it decided not to develop a formal policy for engagement on the basis that it was intuitive and thus unnecessary. Given it has taken so long for informed discussion about this topic, I suggest that relying on intuition is not sufficient, hence the purpose of this thesis.

3. How can museums alter contemporary policies and procedures to integrate participatory practices?

Recognising participation at a strategic and policy level will help museums embrace a participatory methodology as a general approach rather than an exception. If museums can assess the strengths and weaknesses of their participatory practices at a managerial level they will find a place for and be able to recognise the potential and practise participatory practice. For instance, participation and engagement policies can be integrated into existing strategies for audience profiles, evaluation and visitor research, curatorial activities and key collecting areas. However, the tendency for management to focus on outcomes rather than processes impacts on the way participatory and collaborative community engagement are conceived, developed and delivered. This reflects Scott's (2002, 2003, 2004) argument that the managerial tools used in museums are not calibrated to reflect the needs and context of the cultural industries. Thus in

order for participatory practices to develop, museums must rethink and develop relevant success measures and realistic institutional goals.

Museums need to consider how they define community in relation to their activities, how they define their audience and who they would like it to be, and identify how engagement will benefit their mission and vision. Museums must clearly identify their constituent communities and identify what type of participation it is they want/need/would like from them. Part of this identification process requires recognising the different types of expertise and experience that reside in different communities. Rather than ceding control, this brings another layer of specialisation into the institution, and adds depth to the programs and collection. Although many museums do consult with specialists in this regard, they conduct almost no research into the impact of this collaboration on the project or on the participant. Not recognising those who participate in developing programs at a research and evaluation level means there is potential for these groups to be excluded and undervalued.

4. Why should museums already engaged in participation or community engagement adopt a new policy framework?

The examples in this thesis show that many museums integrate communities into their programs (see Chapter 4 and Appendix G). Museums' identification of inclusion, accessibility, learning and diversity illustrates that the industry has had the capacity to do this (and also shows that advocacy for participatory practices is not based merely on impulse or democratic idealism). Recognition of participatory practices and community engagement at a formal level, however, remains elusive.

Entrenching practice into policy for institutions already undertaking community participation projects would provide greater certainty and clarity about the processes and definitions they use to undertake this work. Thus the challenge for these museums is to translate their recognition of engagement and participation into policy. It is interesting that while many migration and anthropological museums use ethnicity as the starting point for their understanding of community (and Museums Australia has developed policies on cultural diversity and for Aboriginal collections in lieu of this),

other communities are subsumed into a large pool in which they are indistinguishable. Asking museums to clearly define communities and how they engage with them beyond the role of audience, therefore, creates a new space in which they can be actively involved and included.

If museums are already engaged in inclusive participatory practices, new policies should only be a matter of process. Although Hirzy (2002) argued against integrating such ideals into a formal policy framework, I argue that recognising their value as a mode of practice highlights their importance within the museum milieu. A clear policy document can demonstrate how an institution or profession understands participatory processes and what caveats are in place to ensure participants are informed and protected. This requires necessary institutional change, a formal declaration of ethics and values, and a commitment to transparency and commonsense.

5. *What aspects of museum work have the potential to be inclusive, informative and/or transformative in a participatory scenario?*⁵

The discussion of benefits in question one and the case studies in the thesis clearly illustrate that many aspects of museum work could benefit from applied participatory theory. Of particular interest, however, is the participatory potential of the curatorial, interpretation and outreach dimensions of museum work. *Basin Bytes* demonstrates that museum outreach projects have the ability to include participants in the development of exhibitions, creation of material and the interpretation of the material produced. Digital collecting, interpretation and exhibition planning provide excellent avenues for delivering transformative learning opportunities that address issues of contemporary concern and interest to the community. This brings a number of benefits to the museum and the participants, and importantly raises the profile of the museum and its social relevance and sustainability. Other case studies discussed throughout the thesis highlight how oral history, website development and public programs can be inclusive and still retain the quality and professionalism that contemporary museums require and that their audiences expect.

⁵ See Chapters 4, 5 and 6 for a more in-depth discussion of this issue.

6. *Will museums lose control of their projects and jeopardise their institutional authority?*

Public access to all areas of museum work is neither desirable nor feasible – for both parties. However, an open approach to processes and development can help both museum and participant alike. An important development in participatory discourse has been the notion that participatory ladders invoke a sense of hierarchy and that they focus too much on the top rung as being the apex of participatory practice (Ross et al., 2002; Henderson, 2004; Chandler, 2001). This argument suggests that institutions (or those in control) must forfeit managerial control in order for participatory projects to occur and/or be successful. For museums, where staff research skills and the concept of cultural significance play a crucial role, many directors, managers and curators believe forfeiting this position is untenable (Hirzy, 2002; Schaffer-Bacon, 2002; Higgins, 07.08.2005; Morton, 02.03.2004; Scott, 03.03.2004). Not only does it challenge the position and authority of museums' cultural knowledge, it has the potential to render these skills obsolete – in effect, if heritage, value and significance were to be decided at a community level there would no longer be the need for curatorial expertise. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is scepticism with the museum industry regarding participatory processes and policies, especially when one considers job security issues and disciplinary territorialism that are prevalent in the museum industry.

Cessation of managerial control, however, is rarely practicable. The dilemma for advocates of participation is where to draw the line between management and community within a project. *Basin Bytes* demonstrates museums' need for a certain degree of project control so that they can meet requirements for strategic planning, project timelines, funding and review. These controls are crucial to the running of any successful cultural institution. They acknowledge that museums are, in general, the primary instigators of participatory projects and thus responsible for choosing to adopt a participatory approach. However, if these caveats override the participatory objective of the project, then it is no longer appropriate to call a project participatory. An appropriate response to this issue, therefore, is to acknowledge that not all aspects of

museum work can be shared. Clear demarcation of project boundaries is thus essential to developing participatory projects.

It is equally important to acknowledge, however, that there are stages within a project where “control” does not rest with either participants or museum. Indeed in many projects this “chaos” phase can be where some of the most interesting work occurs, when boundaries are redefined and tinkered with, and then shaped into something achievable, desirable and manageable. However, starting with simple guidelines and making all parties aware of them, such as subject matter, conduct, medium, budget, timeframe and/or venue, provides some tangible and manageable element of a project which developers can use to rein in wayward projects.

7. *Why is it necessary to develop project-specific community engagement strategies?*

Community engagement cannot be replicated between communities. Just as different museum departments have different needs and requirements so too different communities have different needs and dimensions. These differences provide the context that is crucial for developing the engagement strategy required to implement a project. Ross, et al.’s (2002) spectrum is useful because it at once reflects the diverse contexts in which participatory projects are enacted and respects a diverse definition of stakeholders. The value of approaches devised by interdisciplinary academics, such as Ross et al. (2002) and IAP2 (2002), are that they accept differing degrees of participation based on specific circumstances. They provide an interpretation of the differing participatory states, highlight the different types of stakeholders that might engage in participatory processes and identify what type of promises can be made to participating parties. These context specific variables – diversity, location, gender, subject, climate, land use, local government – make it almost impossible to develop a spectrum for ‘doing’ community engagement that is broadly applicable. This may be why so many why many ladders of participation have been developed: their foundations lie in participatory dimensions rather than with whom it is they are trying to engage (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 1996; Marginson, 1993; Pretty, 1995; White, 19996).

8. *How much time do museums have to commit to do community engagement?*

There is no overall rule or blueprint for how long it should take to run community engagement projects. Project-specific community engagement strategies help identify the particular needs and stages for particular projects.

The significant fear for many museums is that community engagement projects drag on. This is often because the engagement “phase” of a project starts too late, and when project boundaries have already been set and need to be renegotiated. However, by starting early and by mapping out an engagement strategy for a specific project, one that clearly articulates boundaries and start and finish dates, museums can be clear about what it is they can provide, what it is they have to manage. The strategy also helps communities and participants to be clear about the nature and duration of the task in which they are involved. By providing certainty, it is possible to prevent unrealistic expectations developing and associated disappointments. Both projects and community participants generally have a use-by date, unless they are longitudinal projects (and even participants in these must be made aware of the ongoing nature of the research). Planning for and mapping out the engagement and participatory process allows all participants time to regroup, reflect and move onto other projects or interests.

9. *Who can deliver participatory projects, and how can they be better trained and equipped to undertake this work?*

Public programs staff, educators and evaluators all work to some degree with the museum public, most often with audiences and visitors, and have more experience in public situations. Curators, on the other hand, are often at the frontline of participatory projects, particularly during project and research development. Many, however, are often ill-equipped to either deal with the situation or use it to advantage. There is a requirement, therefore, for more curatorial staff with liaison and communications skills and experience.

Although museum training for conservation and collection management is well addressed in Australia, courses for museum workers on engagement and liaison skills

are almost non-existent.⁶ If museums expect employees to embrace a change in practices that put many workers out of their comfort zone, therefore, there needs to be greater attention to this aspect of museum practice? Liaison skills are central to managing stakeholder expectations in participatory and community-based projects. This requires clearly understanding the different needs of stakeholders, the layers of participatory practice, the different processes and principles required to develop the project, and the different outcomes and expectations that participants have. Museums workers who are armed with communication skills stand a much better chance of delivering transformative and beneficial participatory projects.

⁶ In July 2007, the Museum Studies unit at the University of Queensland, is undertaking a master class entitled "Museums and Community Engagement Professional Development Program" in order to enhance professional capacity in this area.

8.3 Establishing a participatory framework for Australian museums: policies, principles and process

The main purpose of a developing a participatory framework for museums is to assist institutions to adopt and integrate participatory practices and methods into their strategic and operational plans. This process will help museums identify which areas can benefit from their refinement/inclusion, and those areas that do not. It is not possible or desirable to develop a participatory model that suggests that the ultimate form of participation is complete community control. A museum-specific participatory spectrum, therefore, is an in-house tool, one that promotes participatory thinking in museums at a broad managerial level and provides a methodology and catalyst for developing participatory projects. Thus, the primary audience for this spectrum is the museum industry itself.

8.3.1 Turning theory into practice and policies

On the basis of the research undertaken for this thesis, it is clear that linear models will not sufficiently convey the principles that guide participatory intent for use in the museum industry. This is partly because some models appear to offer a method without clear theory or reasoning. Further, they work on the principle that those using them are already cognisant and comfortable with participatory methodology. The issue facing the museum industry is that many still need to be convinced that the benefits of adopting a participatory approach are achievable. Ironically, a lack of policy can result in the tendency to adopt participatory rhetoric without fully understanding either the potential or implications of integrating participatory methodology into museum practice. Even though the need for improved practices was acknowledged by many of the key informants interviewed during the research, the limited integration of participatory approaches and methodologies in a practical context shows that their implementation still needs to be addressed. Where institutional support for the principle of participation does exist, the analysis of the case studies still shows that formal policies to help establish it as a core practice and concern would greatly support and enhance the implementation of participatory practices.

By identifying different processes and principles that are central to the pursuit of participatory projects we can remove some of the apprehension that many museum

managers and workers feel. To do this, it is necessary to start from a basic model of participation and engagement that asks museums to consider four key issues (see Figure 8.1 and Table 8.1):

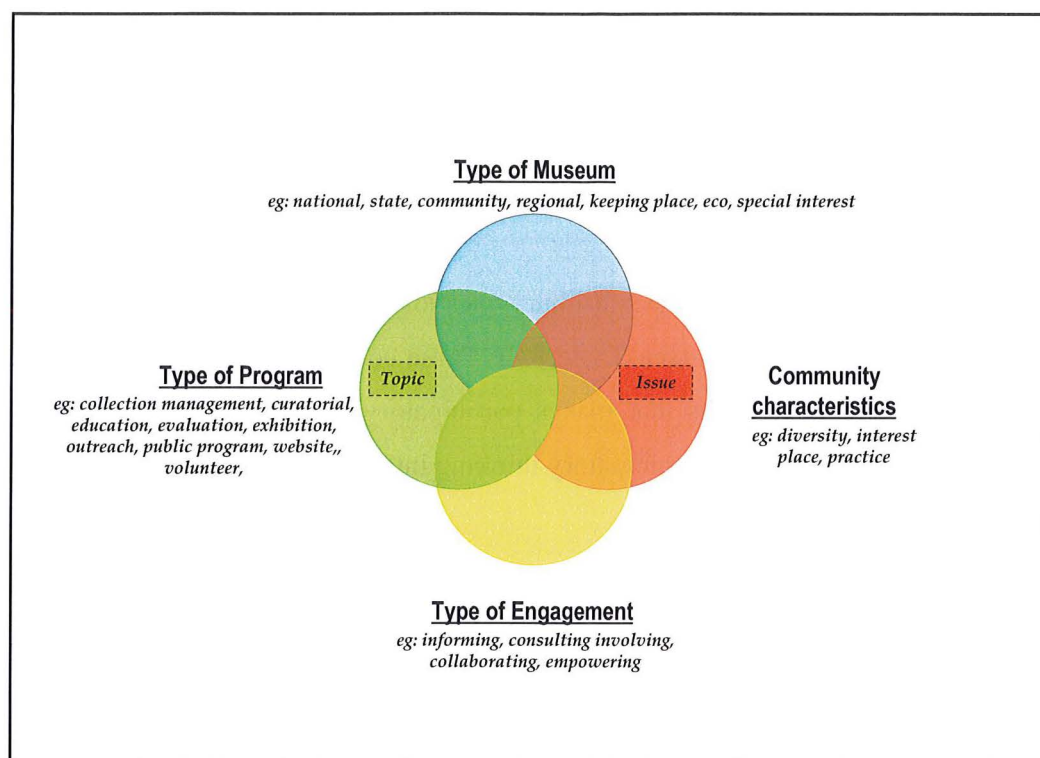


Figure 8.1: Key issues for museums to consider when developing community engagement activities.

The diagram above, 8.1, identifies the four key issues for consideration when museums want to undertake community engagement activities or develop participatory projects: type of museum, type of program, type of engagement and the characteristics of the community. If museums are the project instigators, then they must think about what type of project they are trying to develop in relation to their institutional status, and whether it fits the parameters of their mission. Further, if this project is being driven by the subject matter rather than the community they wish to engage, they need to think about the type of topic in which people can participate. On the basis of this, they can then make some decisions about approaching appropriate community groups or individuals. Once this is achieved, they can then collectively identify the most appropriate engagement tools to deliver the project. If, however, the museum is more intent on identifying a particular community prior to

developing a topic, then the participatory process starts earlier. It requires the museum and community to liaise and negotiate the project topic as well as the appropriate engagement processes. Both approaches emphasise the importance of collaborating when it comes to choosing engagement processes. This is critical, as museums need to learn as much as possible about reaching different members of the community. Institutions must be aware, however, that such an approach can also isolate those who are not engaged with the major contact group. Thus, thorough research into the characteristics of each community must be undertaken in conjunction with any liaison activities.

Each of the four key issues has some subsidiary questions that museums need to consider in relation to participatory projects (see Table 8A). These could help to form the basis of an institutional policy or guidelines that makes participatory practices more acceptable and achievable, and which entrench participatory thinking into institutional operations.

PARTICIPATORY DIMENSIONS	ISSUES AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
Type of museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of issues do different sorts of museum need to consider when developing participatory projects? • How does the museum's mission allow for participatory practices and projects? • Is there a value statement for the museum that integrates participatory principles? • Do we have enough staff to run a participatory project?
Type of project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of projects best incorporate participatory approaches? • How can the major collecting activities of the institution be enhanced and improved by participatory projects? • What is the participatory goal of the project? • Can collecting activities be incorporated into this project? • How does the museum recognise the project in a formal capacity? • Is it an ongoing project or does it have strict parameters?
Community characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who does the museum identify as its key stakeholders and audiences? • Are these communities already engaged in these types of activities or projects? • Are communities located in isolated areas? If so, what will the most effective communication be? • Are there sensitivities in the communities? • Are there new audiences that the museum is keen to engage?
Type of engagement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the museum have time to develop a participatory project or is it trying to achieve too much in too tight a timeframe? • How often will face-to-face communication be used, particularly for regional or isolated projects? • What types of engagement strategies promote participant learning and capacity building? • Are staff sufficiently cognisant of participatory principles and practices? • Is the topic sensitive enough to warrant extra support for community participants? • Is there a potential for community disengagement? • What procedures will be used in order to get the project on track or address issues as they arise? • What learning does the museum hope to achieve from the basis – at both an institutional and community level? • Is the engagement approach to inform, involve, consult, collaborative or empower?

Table 8A: Dimension-based questions for developing participatory museum engagement activities.

To test the usefulness of this approach, I applied it to the *Basin Bytes* project to see whether this could contribute to project planning. Table 8B below shows there was the potential to identify a range of issues, including communication needs, staff numbers, engagement strategies and how the material collected would be used.

PARTICIPATORY DIMENSIONS	ISSUES AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
Type of museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMA – worked in collaboration with MDBC & UTAS under auspices of ARC Linkage Grant therefore sufficient rationale & finances for project development • NMA mission: clearly shows that this type of project fits into the vision for the museum: “engaging & providing access for audiences nationally & internationally delivering innovative programs” (NMA, 2007: website) • NMA has value statement but this does not identify community participation or engagement. It does, however, note an intention to anticipate audience needs. This could be redeveloped to reflect participatory dimensions & to incorporate an engagement strategy • NMA had sufficient staff to run project, but not enough staff time allocated to project management
Type of project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Programs project that fit thematically within curatorial & ICT sections • Integrated community collecting in a way that depicted & identified what is important in the current environment & what potentially could be lost in the advent of greater environmental degradation within the MDB. Thus reflected contemporary history & perspective • <u>Did not</u> cater for or explain whether or how this material will be integrated into the collection • Goal to get participants to develop images and stories for an online exhibition • Project recognised online, & in relation to broader ARC grant. Limited museum-wide understanding of project process, procedures or outcomes • Strict parameters to project in relation to ARC grant, funding for hire of facilitator, timelines needed for projects to be uploaded onto web. Thus museum-led.
Community characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMA identified communities on the basis of place in the first instance with limited consultation at a broad community level (particularly reflecting the diversity of the MDB). Also identified communities with whom they had a link. Limited selection process for community identification • Communities already engaged in participatory NRM projects • Communities in regional areas & required travel budget, greater face-to-face communication & time to undertake project • Sensitivities in communities in relation to isolation, unemployment, environmental degradation, water shortage. Also psychological issues relating to education & self esteem • Potential for broad new audiences, particularly via the NMA website
Type of engagement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time available to develop participatory project, but not to run it – limited staff time allocated to project • Minimal face-to-face engagement via NMA staff - email & phone used during difficult issues • Local facilitation & workshops identified as a way to engage participants & promote learning • Digital technology used as a hook to spark interest in participation • Potential for greater participation in development of website, which would have built capacity • NMA manager only CCD trained person related to project & but not representative of museum training • Is the topic sensitive enough to warrant extra support for community participants? • Potential for community disengagement if technology – database & website – did not work • Learning identified as curatorial principles • Evaluation built into brief via ARC Linkage, but undertaken by outside researcher • Empower identified but in reality more akin to collaborative

Table 8B Basin Bytes in relation to participatory dimension-based questions

Each section of Table 8B has been completed with the benefit of hindsight. Nonetheless, I believe it shows that there is potential for this framework to work in relation to project development as there is a place for most of the recommendations that emerged from the *Basin Bytes Evaluation Report* (Wills, 2004) and as outlined in Chapter 6.

8.3.2 Underpinning policies with principles

In Chapter 2, the review of museum studies literature identified four predominant participatory principles that influence museums – access, diversity, inclusion and learning. I used these principles to shape the presentation of research findings in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in recognition of their thematic importance for the museum industry and museum studies arena, and because I was keen to determine whether or not they had a significant impact in an Australian context. In recognition of their relevance at an industry level, I wanted to use them as a starting point for developing a museum-specific participatory spectrum as it is clearly better to use existing concepts than to begin again.

The project examples discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate that these principles exist but that they are used primarily for the development of programs for particular audiences rather than for developing collaborative projects with different types of communities. Access predominantly means physical access, and thus poses challenges for museums that do not have an integrated and/or participatory outreach strategy. Diversity generally reflects ethnicity and/or Indigenous issues and often falls short of recognising community diversity in terms of interest or capacity, particularly when it comes to regional issues such as agriculture and NRM. Inclusion is closely related to representation, and affects issues from Indigenous staff numbers, audience participation and gender issues (although lately it has also begun to address the social issues addressed in community health and development). Interactive learning in an in-house capacity is different to collaborative and transformative learning in an outreach capacity.

A major issue, therefore, is whether these principles are adequate to help guide museums to develop participatory and collaborative outreach projects. The evidence presented in Chapter 4, 5 and 6 suggests that on their own access, diversity, inclusion and learning are too malleable to provide sufficient guidelines and parameters for participatory project development. Certainly in the current environment they have not been influential enough to warrant the development of integrated participatory or engagement strategies and guidelines for the Australian museum industry. Thus we need to ask a number of questions to find how museums can achieve and address these issues in a manner that complements missions and the fundamentals of museum work. If we ask ourselves what it is we trying to

achieve by adopting a participatory approach, we start to think about participatory methodologies as having a process and outcome, and being underpinned by certain values. If there is potential for transformative learning, social interaction or skills acquisition, for example, then there are very real arguments for applying a participatory approach to certain projects within the museum sector. When considering these outcomes in relation to the fundamental concepts of democracy, education, learning and community that are embedded in the concept of participation, therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to expect to see them reflected in a project development and rationale.

In order to achieve more realistic and achievable participatory museum projects, the proposed spectrum must blend aspects of international museum practice with interdisciplinary participatory practices. To do this, I return to the principles outlined by a number of authors dealing with participatory practices (Hirzy, 2002; Aslin & Brown, 2004; Ross et al., 2002, and IAP2, 2004). These approaches are all underpinned by a clear statement of principles and values that guide their practices. As noted in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 7, Hirzy (2002), under the auspices of the American Association of Museums' *Museums and Community Engagement Initiative*, identified a number of assets that museums have that can be used to promote engagement practices and principles within the sector and its constituent community. "Accessibility ... connectedness ... safety ... objectivity ... trustworthiness ... reward ... substance ... and reciprocity" (2002: 15) are building blocks for developing guiding principles for participatory engagement because they demonstrate a commitment to values and practice that can affect both institutions and communities alike. However, as museums are generally the drivers of project development, it is important to ensure these values are applied in a way that benefits both parties. Thus the values also become a checklist for integrity, one that also helps to guide museums through project development, maintain their relevance within the broader community, and thus provide them with tangible arguments for funding submissions and grant proposals.

Of the interdisciplinary models assessed, three stand out as clearly integrating principles and methodologies that can guide practice and implementation. To reiterate the discussion in the previous chapter, Aslin & Brown's (2004) model identified courage, inclusiveness, commitment, respect and honest, flexibility, practicability and mutual obligation as suitable

principles to underpin project development. IAP2 (2002) spectrum identified five categories for participation (inform, involve, consult, collaborate and empower) and suggested that their public impact depended upon the ability of the governing institution to commit to the promises embedded within each category. Ross et al.'s (2002) spectrum, while not directly based on values, does, nonetheless, prioritise stakeholder diversity in such a way as to promote the principle of diversity itself.

Table 8C, below, presents a range of different principles that form the basis of participatory projects, and outlines their different attributes in relation to museum work. Obviously, not all projects can embody all of these simultaneously. However, the list can act as a point of reference that helps shape and promote participatory projects. It can be used in-house to promote participatory project development at a managerial level, and can be used with communities during a liaison and negotiation phase to ensure participants understand a museum's motivation for engaging in a project and the parameters in which it intends to operate.

PARTICIPATORY PRINCIPLE	IMPLICATION/RAMIFICATION
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums & their staff are approachable • Tools & projects are clear, concise & user-friendly
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums are prepared to work with communities for the duration of a project to achieve the desired result • Museums devote appropriate human & financial resources to see a project to fruition • Museums uphold a range of standards & principles • Museums aim to be sustainable
Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums are in tune with their constituent communities • Museums develop ongoing relationships with communities • Museums strive to include museums so as to promote a shared outcomes for their activities
Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums are prepared to tackle difficult issues • Museums look outside the square in order to develop participatory project • Museums recognise & value individuals & communities who show spirit, determination & drive
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums recognise community diversity in terms of stakeholders - such as, political affiliation, ethnicity, gender, class, education etc
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums are prepared to negotiate with communities & participants in order to achieve the best result possible
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums endeavour to be representative in the way they develop programs, the issues they cover and the people they involve
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums understand the benefits of learning and transformative learning as part of the participatory process
Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums present a range of views without interfering with the primary message, providing it is not racist, sexist and so forth
Practicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums present opportunities that are challenging but achievable so as to maintain participants interest, learning etc
Reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums work collaboratively to contribute to other people's projects & project ideas as well as in the process of developing their own
Respect and honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums develop projects in a way that respects all participants and stakeholders • Museums adopt a clear and open approach to communication • Museums recognise the need for honesty & transparency when developing and running participatory programs • Museums articulate their needs & proposed outcomes when developing projects
Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums pay participants & facilitators engaged to contribute to projects in a timely & appropriate manner
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums undertake all projects with respect for the physical & psychological safety of staff and participants
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum processes & approaches are clear at the beginning of & throughout each project
Trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums can be depended upon to acknowledge their commitments, respect the privacy & other legal issues involved with project development – such as copyright, sacred material etc

Table 8C: Principles underpinning the development and delivery of participatory projects.

8.3.3 Integrating participatory processes into project development

At a macro level, the research in this thesis demonstrates the importance of project process. However, without a catalyst or clearly articulated principles, a process driven model does not sufficiently reflect the disparate opinions and perspectives held by contemporary museum practitioners in relation to this topic or the challenges that many perceive such project pose. Further, although process is a crucial framework from which to consider project development, I argue that the process of developing participatory museum programs is contingent on context – a stance that has resonance with action research scholars as well as advocates of ecomuseology and Falk & Dierking's (2000) discussion of the contextual model for learning. Thus the framework that I propose embeds process in context: it suggests the process of project development requires an understanding of the contextual dimensions of the museum/institution, the project and the participant community (and the multiple communities within that), and the need for multi-stakeholder participation in the introductory phase of project development. This contextual understanding then influences the choice of engagement strategy, engagement tools and, importantly, the project subject matter.

Chapter 2 also highlighted Scott's (2004) argument that museums would benefit from adapting evaluation methodologies to integrate a better understanding of the value of museum based activities. This thesis has integrated an evaluation research approach to better understand museum outreach projects with potentially transformative and collaborative dimensions.

These approaches, however, are not sufficiently applicable to the development of museum projects because they do not recognise the validity of institutional requirements from participatory interaction. Thus understanding and accepting that different types of institutions have different needs and reasons for engaging in participatory projects is vital. Further, when institutions seek to engage a community in a project, particularly one with participatory dimensions, they need to consider what constitutes that community, as per Ross et al.'s (2002) model which recognised: individuals, community-based management, community collectives, organised interest groups, composite stakeholder bodies and shared management bodies.

The choice of engagement strategy must reflect both the type of project one is trying to develop, and the type of people the museum or the organising body hopes to engage. Clarity of purpose at this point is pivotal to the design and delivery of the project: it is better to be less participatory and meet participants' expectations than raise expectations and be unable to deliver. This is where understanding the differing dimensions of participation is paramount. Thus table 8D, below, illustrates how these dimensions relate to different types of museum work, using the engagement model developed by IAP2. Importantly, it also provides examples of Australian museum projects (where known) in order help museums understand more fully the potential of different participatory approaches:

	COLLECTIONS	CURATORIAL RESEARCH & EXHIBITIONS	EDUCATION & LEARNING	EVALUATION	INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY	MANAGEMENT	OUTREACH	PUBLIC PROGRAMS	VISITOR RESEARCH
<i>Inform</i>	<i>Promote & explain activity via information sessions, publications, or brochures</i>	<i>Promote & discuss project/research via publications, conferences or brochures</i>	<i>Promote & explain project/research via educational material, sessions, publications, or brochures</i>	<i>Publish findings from evaluation research</i>	<i>Promote & explain new technologies via information sessions, publications or displays</i>	<i>Promote & explain changes & developments in information sessions, conferences, publications, policy documents</i>	<i>Advertise or provide information about projects for diverse & dispersed groups</i>	<i>Advertise new programs or activities; provide pre-prepared information to audiences & visitors</i>	<i>Promote information about visitor numbers</i>
<i>Example</i>	<i>New acquisitions information eg: Powerhouse Museum website</i>	<i>Research updates on Australian Museum website</i>	<i>Exhibition publications, video eg: Future Harvest Education vide, Museum Victoria</i>	<i>Australian Museum Audience Research Centre website (AMARC)</i>	<i>Collection management systems, new software etc</i>	<i>Internal policy documents, presentations at Museums Australia conferences</i>	<i>Articles in museum magazines such as Museums Australia; Travelling suitcase, Canberra Museum & Art Gallery</i>	<i>Signature Quilt Project, National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame; pre-recorded tours eg: Kuranda Railway, Cairns Qld.</i>	<i>Published visitor statistics & discussions in articles, eg: AMARC</i>
<i>Consult</i>	<i>Ask for feedback regarding established projects, such as managing particular items</i>	<i>Ask for advice regarding a particular topic; interview/record oral history to obtain information</i>	<i>Identify key learning groups, approach for advice about program development</i>	<i>Identify target research groups, approach for advice about running the project/research</i>	<i>Approach different ICT groups to gauge use of technology & acquire additional information</i>	<i>Identify qualified staff to help develop projects; identify other institutions interested in the project & provide with information</i>	<i>Identify different communities connected to a topic & ask for ideas, feedback & information</i>	<i>Ask for feedback about programs & activities; ask visitors to fill out comments books</i>	<i>Ask visitors to give feedback about their visit & experience</i>
<i>Example</i>	<i>Keeping Culture, Australian Museum; Beirut to Baghdad, Powerhouse Museum</i>	<i>South Melbourne Oral History Project, Museum Victoria</i>	<i>Many Rhymes, One Rhythm, National Museum of Australia</i>	<i>(no example found)</i>	<i>Pass the Salt, National Museum of Australia</i>			<i>Evaluation research, eg: projects undertaken by NMA, MV; visitor books in regional museums</i>	

	COLLECTIONS	CURATORIAL	EDUCATION & LEARNING	EVALUATION	INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY	MANAGEMENT	OUTREACH	PUBLIC PROGRAMS	VISITOR RESEARCH
Involve	Include people in the development of collections management projects		Include students or participants in the delivery of programs	Include participants in the evaluation phase of project	Actively engage participants or community in the use and implementation of technology	Include a community in discussions about project management	Involve disparate & diverse communities in developing material for projects	Include participants or communities in the program	Include participants in collecting visitor research information
Example	<i>McKay Volunteer Project, Museum Victoria; Community Collections, Museum Victoria</i>	<i>Pass the Salt, National Museum of Australia; Community Access Gallery, Immigration Museum</i>	<i>Murray Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom, NMA</i>	<i>Basin Bytes, National Museum of Australia</i>	<i>Basin Bytes, National Museum of Australia</i>	<i>Future Harvest, Museum Victoria</i>	<i>A Changing People, A Changing Land, NMA</i>	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Outreach Program, AM</i>	<i>No example</i>
Collaborate	Work with other institutions or communities to address & manage a problem or issue	Work with communities or other institutions/ parties to develop a project	Include students or participants in the development & delivery of programs	Work with a range of like institutions, groups or individuals to develop a more involved understanding of evaluation	Work with a range of like institutions, groups or individuals to develop programs	Work with a range of like institutions, groups or individuals at a managerial level	Work with disparate & diverse communities to define project parameters & develop material for projects	Work with a range of like institutions, groups or individuals to develop & deliver programs & activities	Work with a range of like institutions, or groups to develop a more involved understanding of visitor research
Example	<i>Women on Farms Gathering, Museum Victoria</i>	<i>MuseumLink, Western Australian Museum; Sharing their Legacy, Community History Unit, FATE program, AM</i>	<i>Murray Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom, NMA</i>	<i>MARVEL, University of Technology, Australian Museum, Royal Botanic Garden (NSW) & Enviro-metrics Pty Ltd</i>	<i>Collections Australia Network website</i>	<i>Murray Darling Outreach Project, University of Tasmania, NMA & Murray Darling Basin Commission</i>	<i>Basin Bytes, NMA</i>	<i>Basin Bytes, NMA; Future Harvest, Museum Victoria</i>	<i>MARVEL, University of Technology, Australian Museum, Royal Botanic Garden (NSW) & Enviro-metrics Pty Ltd</i>

	COLLECTIONS	CURATORIAL	EDUCATION & LEARNING	EVALUATION	INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY	MANAGEMENT	OUTREACH	PUBLIC PROGRAMS	VISITOR RESEARCH
Empower	Work with individuals to develop expertise & create new skills which can be taken to manage other collections	Work with communities or other institutions/ parties to develop a project with the intention of integrating learning & development for both parties into the project	Identify key learning needs with participants communities, jointly conduct sessions, identify learning perimeters & goals	Include participant in design, development & delivery of evaluation	Work with community to develop or refine technology suitable for use in project	Include community at both a managerial & implementation level so as to enhance another institution's mission, & improve skills	Develop inclusive projects with the community & which can be run & adapted independently	Respond to a community's need/desire to develop programs to enhance relations or emphasis particular topics or issues	Teach communities how to understand & measure visitors' engagement
Example	<i>Regional workshop training, Powerhouse museum</i>	<i>Kodja Place, Western Australia</i>	<i>No example</i>	<i>No example</i>	<i>No example</i>	<i>Kodja Place, Western Australia</i>	<i>Melbourne's Living Museum of the West</i>	<i>Custodian's Welcome, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West</i>	<i>No example</i>

Table 8D: A participatory model for Australian museums

8.4 Thesis conclusions

At the beginning of this thesis I used a simple participatory parable to illustrate the potential benefits including people in decision making processes and the development and delivery of museum projects. I hypothesised that adopting a participatory approach would help enhance museum's social relevance, integrity and standing, and provide communities with opportunities to learn, grow and develop. The idealism inherent in this is, clearly, based on an assumption that there are communities waiting for institutions to embrace more contemporary management strategies and adopt more inclusive policies. The reality, of course, is somewhat different – many communities don't want to be engaged, have been engaged and let down or have been over engaged. In addition, traditional practices, timeframes, budgets, staff limitations and priorities all contribute to museums' inability to fully embrace participatory practices. This is not because they are inherently discriminatory, but rather because the infrastructure, time, staff and training programs are not readily available.

The three driving methodologies behind this research, however, provide the industry with concrete methodologies that can help practitioners integrate participatory practices into everyday activities. Firstly, action research, which combines action and reflection, theory and practice, and participation, can help museums better understand the cyclical and reflective process of their projects. Secondly, improved communication processes will help generate a culture of transparency, inclusion and engagement. Finally, a more sophisticated and integrated understanding of evaluation, will help museums understand their business, their audiences and improve their research activities. If, as Vanclay et al. (2004) argued, evaluation is understood as research for informed decision making that is conducted throughout the life of a project, a better understanding of project dimensions and therefore impact can be developed. This is especially important for participatory projects where the process of engagement is as crucial as the project outcome. An understanding of these methodologies and their use in conjunction with the spectrum developed in this thesis will help museums as they develop a more participatory approach to their activities.

Australian museums have room for, and even rely upon, community-driven initiatives as part of their ongoing existence. In this they are similar to other disciplinary arenas,

such as NRM, community cultural development and community health. Yet while these disciplinary agencies have embraced, to a greater or lesser extent, participatory processes (Ross et al., 2002; Aslin, 2004; Vanclay, 1999, 2004; Pretty, 1995; Wang and Burris, 1994, 1997), the Australian museum industry has remained suspicious about the perceived loss of authority such projects suggest. Indeed in larger museums, where collecting, preserving and assessing the significance of material culture require specialist training and where there is greater capacity to run such projects, there is hesitation about developing community-based projects as anything other than add-on programs. The irony of this is apparent when one considers the large number of volunteer-run museums throughout Australia, until one reflects on the hierarchical nature of the museum system with which Winkworth (2005) challenged the industry.

Thus the Australian museum industry is at a crossroads for a number of reasons. It needs to be at once inclusive of a culturally diverse and dispersed community whilst retaining a level of intellectual integrity and remaining attractive to its visitors. It also needs to address the widening gap between museum types, their levels of professional practice, and their levels of finance and training. Clearly, the integration of participatory theory and practices alone will not be sufficient to solve all of these dilemmas. However, participatory theory and practices could form the basis for a range of practical changes that push the industry towards a more inclusive, sustainable and viable future. Just as the New Museology encouraged museums to look beyond their collections to their audiences, so this thesis suggests Australian museums can continue to benefit from casting their eyes further a field towards their constituent communities to better understand the process, and ensuing benefits, of participation in their outreach programs or other program areas. In order for museums to remain sustainable and viable in the current social, economic and even environmental climate, they must demonstrate their ability to respond to community issues, entertain their audiences as well as be the forerunners and instigators of new knowledge and discovery. This is a heavy load but what better way to address these needs by including those demanding them to participate in their delivery?

REFERENCES AND APPENDICES

PRIMARY RESEARCH MATERIAL

1. Recorded Interviews

Museum personnel: recorded interviews

Name	Institution	Interview Date (s)
Adam Blackshaw	NMA	1 May 2003
		7 August 2003
		10 June 2004
		1 December 2004
		1 July 2005
Jodie Cunningham	NMA	1 May 2003
Liza Dale-Hallett	Museum Victoria	7 August 2003
David Demant,	Museum Victoria	7 March 2005
Louise Douglas	NMA	3 March 2005
Sarah Edwards	Museum Victoria	7 March 2005
Phil Gordon	Australian Museum	5 March 2005
Patrick Greene	Museum Victoria	8 March 2005
Des Griffin	Australian Museum	4 March 2005
Peter Haffenden	Living Museum of the West	2 March 2005
Martin Hallett	Arts Victoria	7 March 2005
Matthew Higgins	NMA	1 July 2005
Lynda Kelly	Australian Museum	5 March 2005
Craddock Morton	NMA	3 March 2005
Rebecca Pinchin	Powerhouse Museum	4 March 2005
Roslyn Russell	Freelance Curator	3 March 2005
Carol Scott	Powerhouse Museum	4 March 2005
Maisy Stapleton	Museum Gallery Foundation NSW	4 March 2005
Matthew Trinca	NMA	1 May 2003

Basin Bytes facilitators: recorded interviews

Name	Institution	Interview Date(s)
Paul Gamble	Freelance Artist, Echuca, VIC	7 August 2003 10 October 2003 17 February 2004 21 May 2004
Kim Field	NRM worker, Wentworth Shire Council, NSW	3 February 2004 6 March 2004 25 June 2004
James Giddey	Regional Arts Development Officer, Broken Hill, NSW	3 February 2004 6 March 2004
David Cooney	NRM worker, Alexandrina Shire Council, SA	1 December 2004 1 July 2005
Marian Stark	NRM worker, Toowoomba Landcare Group	1 December 2004
James McKee	NRM worker, Toowoomba Landcare Group	1 July 2005

Basin Bytes: participant focus group

Name	Project	Interview Date(s)
Participants Focus Group	Wentworth	23 May 2004

2. Taped audio journals

Basin Bytes Participants': audio journals*

Name	Project	Tape Date(s)
Callum Butcher	Echuca	(undated) October 2003
Louise Picone	Echuca	(undated) October 2003
Maxine Vale	Echuca	(undated) October 2003
Maggie Mars	Wentworth	(Multiple) Feb- June 2004
Jadine Temby	Wentworth	(Multiple) Feb- June 2004
Jennifer McCalister	Wentworth	(Multiple) Feb- June 2004
Jennifer Matthews	Wentworth	(Multiple) Feb- June 2004
Kim Field	Wentworth	(Multiple) Feb- June 2004
Participants Focus Group	Wentworth	23 May 2004
David Cooney	Goolwa	(Multiple) Feb 2005 - March
Gloria Jones	Goolwa	(Multiple) Feb 2005 - March
Frank Tuckwell	Goolwa	(Multiple) Feb 2005 - March

3. Field notes and journals

Type	Project	Dates
Handwritten journals (x5 – one lost (stolen) during course of thesis)	Echuca, Wentworth, Goolwa & Toowoomba	(Multiple entries) August 2003- November 2005
Taped journals	Echuca, Wentworth	August 2003- July 2004

* Participants' taped audio journals were not returned from the Toowoomba project.

4. Relevant Committing to Place project team planning documents

- *Basin Bytes* Ethics Clearance Forms
- *Basin Bytes* Evaluation Consent Forms (developed for each project)
- *Basin Bytes* Evaluation Information Sheets (developed for each project)
- *Basin Bytes Echuca* Evaluation Framework, 3 June 2003. (J. Wills)
- *Basin Bytes Wentworth* Evaluation Framework, 4 March 2004. (J. Wills)
- Basin Bytes III: Toowoomba to Goolwa Progress Report: 8/11/04
- *Basin Bytes Goolwa/Toowoomba* Evaluation Framework, 18 January 2005. (J. Wills)
- *Basin Bytes III: Goolwa/Toowoomba* Evaluation questions for interviews: Project meeting, NMA, Canberra, June 30 – July 1, 2005 (J. Wills)

5. Cited Pers.Comm. persons

Name	Link/Organisation
Louann Bennett	Echuca Basin Bytes Participant
Charlie Dawson	Echuca Basin Bytes Participant
Claire-Francis Craig	Western Australian Museum
Paul Gamble	Echuca Basin Bytes Facilitator
James Giddey	Wentworth Basin Bytes Facilitator
Gloria Jones	Goowla-Toowoomba Basin Bytes Participant
Dr Ruth Lane	RMIT (Formerly, NMA)
Irene Pagram	Campaspe Shire Council
Andrew Remeley	NMA
Denis Shepherd	NMA
Deborah Trantor	Queensland Museum
Maxine Vale	Echuca Basin Bytes Participant

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Government organisations & agencies

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)	www.abc.net.au/heywire/
Australian Bureau of Statistics	http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/d2e04b2e8710f3a4ca256f7200832f0e!OpenDocument
Australian Electoral Commission	www.aec.gov.au/
Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation	http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/
Murray-Darling Basin Commission:	www.mdbc.gov.au
Alexandrina Council	www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au/
Shire of Campaspe	www.campaspe.vic.gov.au/
Toowoomba City Council	www.toowoomba.qld.gov.au/
Wentworth Shire Council	www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au/

Australian museums & agencies

Australian Museum:	www.ausmus.gov.au
Australian Museums and Galleries on Line:	http://amol.org.au/runrabbitrun/about.htm
Collections Australia Network	www.can.net
Collections Council of Australia:	www.collectionscouncil.com.au
FATE program (University of New South Wales)	http://www.fate.unsw.edu.au/
Kodja Place	www.kodjaplace.net.au
Lady Denman Maritime Museum:	www.ladydenman.asn.au
Melbourne's Living Museum of the West:	www.livingmuseum.org.au
Migration Heritage Centre	www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/
Museum Resource Centre Network, Queensland	www.qm.qld.gov.au/organisation/regional/mrcn/
Museum Victoria:	www.museum.vic.gov.au www.museum.vic.gov.au/futureharvest www.immigration.museum.vic.gov.au www.scienceworks.museum.vic.gov.au
Museums and Galleries of the Northern Territory:	www.magnt.nt.gov.au

Museums Australia: National Museum of Australia:	www.museumsaustralia.org.au www.nma.gov.au/ www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/echuca_basin_bytes www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/wentworth_basin_bytes http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/goolwa_toowoomba/ http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/now_showing/old_new_land/understanding_australia/ www.pioneerwomen.com.au/welcome.htm
National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame: Powerhouse Museum: South Australian History Trust - Community History Unit: South Australian Museum:	www.pioneerwomen.com.au/welcome.htm www.powerhouse.com http://www.history.sa.gov.au/ www.samuseum.sa.gov.au
Western Australian Museum:	www.museum.wa.gov.au
International museums & agencies	
American Association of Museums	www.aam-us.org/
Campaign for Learning in Museums & Galleries	http://www.clmg.org.uk/
Heritage Lottery Fund	www.hlf.org.uk
Hype Gallery	(www.hypegallery.com)
International Council of Museums (ICOM)	www.icom.net
International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)	www.icomos.org
The British Museum	http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/
United Nations	http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ www.unesco.org
Australian shire councils	
Alexandrina Shire Council:	www.alexandrina.sa.gov.au
Campaspe Shire Council:	http://www.echucamoama.com/html/location.html http://www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au/docs/maps/showmap.php?map=shire-map.png&txt=Shire%20Map
Wentworth Shire Council:	http://www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au/docs/maps/A4-wen.pdf
Other Reference	
Photovoice	www.photovoice.com/background
International Association for Public Participation:	www.iap2.org.au
Future of Australia's threatened ecosystems:	www.fate.org.au
NRM Groups	
Toowoomba Landcare Group:	www.tlg.org.au

APPENDICES

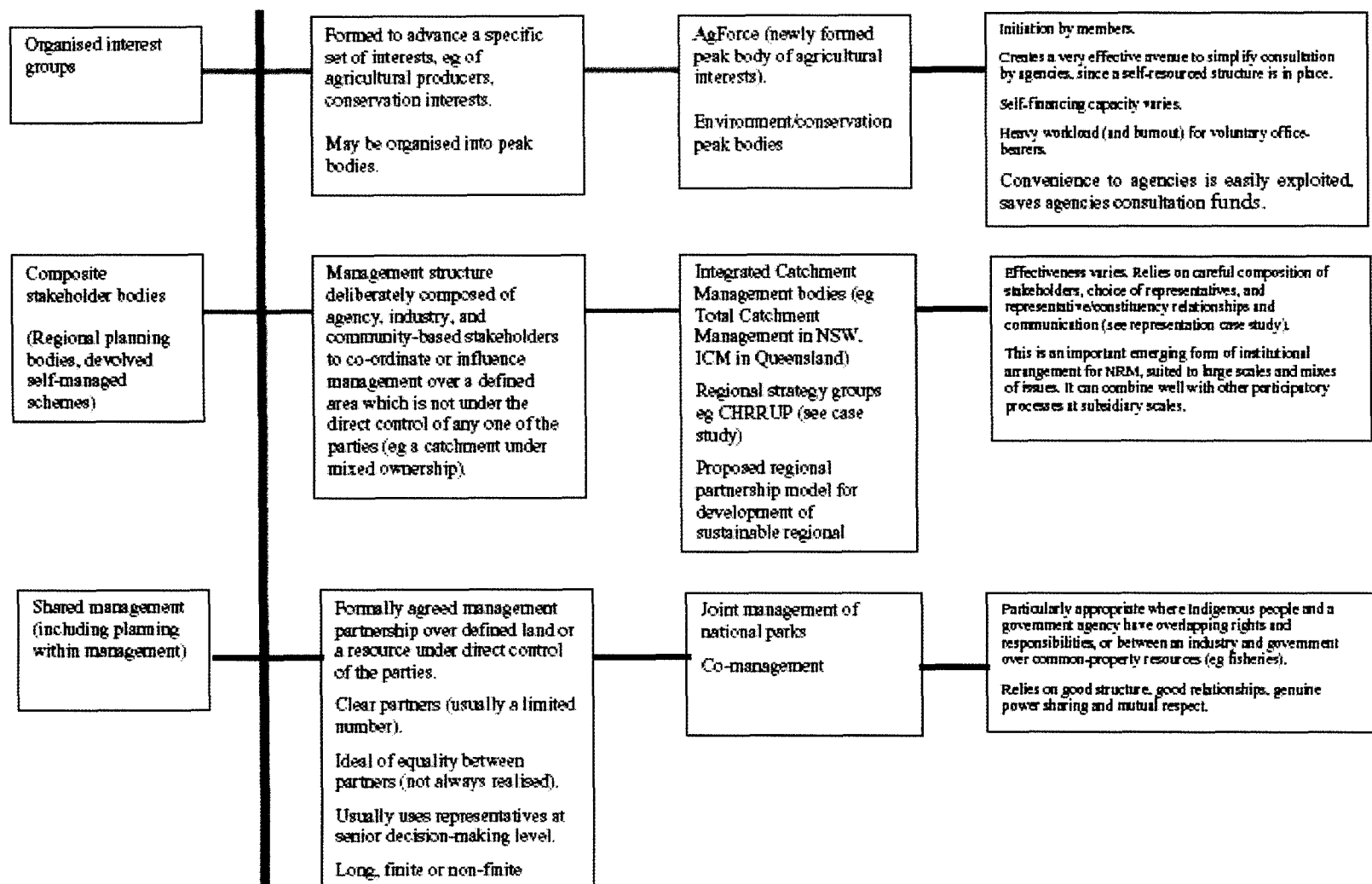
- Appendix A: Recorded interviews with Australian Museum Workers
- Appendix B: Participatory Approaches to Natural Resource Management
- Appendix C: Museums and Community Engagement poster
- Appendix D: *Basin Bytes Evaluation Report*: Executive Summary
- Appendix E: *Committing to Place Final Project Report*: Executive Summary
- Appendix F: Arts/heritage/museum professionals informally consulted
- Appendix G: Australian Project Example Boxes
- Appendix H: Basin Bytes Fact Sheet
- Appendix I: Basin Bytes Stakeholder Goals
- Appendix J: Questions for Taped Audio Journals
- Appendix K: 'Postcards from the Basin'

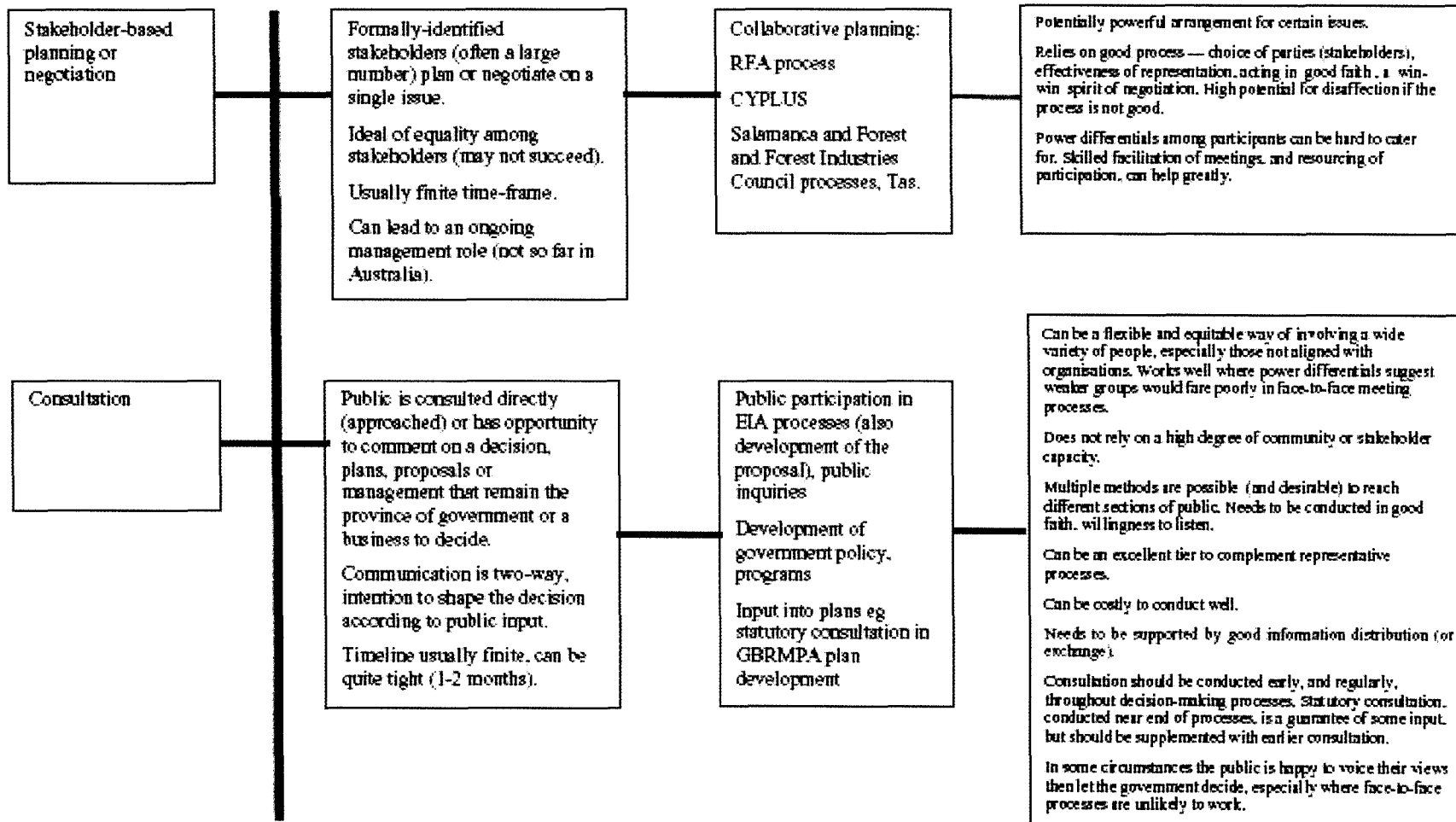
Appendix A: Recorded interviews with Australian Museum Workers

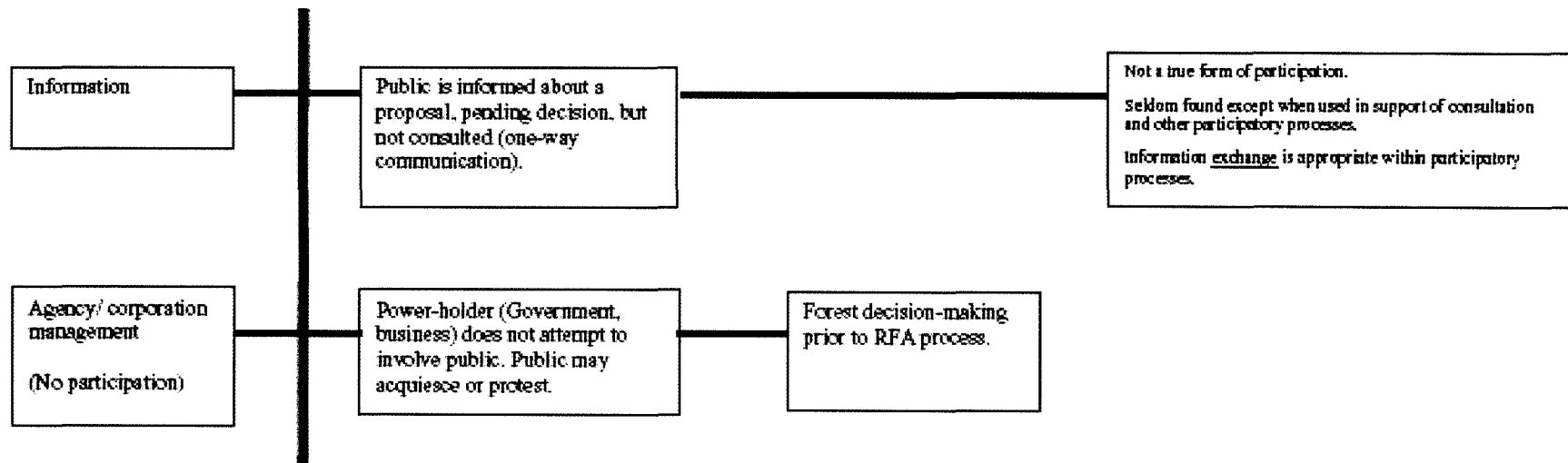
Interview No #	Interviewee	Position	Institution	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
#1	Matthew Trinca	Curator	National Museum of Australia (NMA)	NMA, ACT	1 May 2003
#2	Liza Dale-Hallett	Senior Curator	Museum Victoria (MV)	Melbourne M Museum, (MM) MV, Vic	7 August 2003
#3	Peter Haffenden	Director	Living Museum of the West	Living Museum of the West, Maribyrnong, Vic.	2 March 2005
#4	Louise Douglas	General Manager	NMA	NMA, ACT	3 March 2005
#5	Roslyn Russell	Freelance Historian/Curator	Roslyn Russell Associates	NMA, ACT	3 March 2005
#6	Craddock Morton	Director	NMA	NMA, ACT	3 March 2005
#7	Maisy Stapleton	CEO	Museum Gallery Foundation, NSW (MGFNSW)	MGFNSW, Sydney	4 March 2005
#8	Carol Scott	Evaluation and Visitor Services Manager	Powerhouse Museum (PHM); Museums Australia	PHM, NSW	4 March 2005
#9	Rebecca Pinchin	Regional Services Manager	PHM	PHM, NSW	4 March 2005
#10	Des Griffin	Fmr Director	Australian Museum (AM)	AM	4 March 2005
#11	Phil Gordon	Manager, Aboriginal Heritage Unit	AM	AM	5 March 2005
#12	Lynda Kelly	Evaluation and Visitor Services Manager		AM	5 March 2005
#13	Martin Hallett	Project Manager	Arts Victoria (AV)	AV, Vic.	7 March 2005
#14	Sarah Edwards	Manager, Discovery program	MV	MM, MV, Vic.	7 March 2005
#15	Patrick Green	Director	MV	MM, MV, Vic.	8 March 2005
#16	David Demant	Curator	MV	North Fitzroy	7 March 2005

Appendix B: Participatory Approaches to Natural Resource Management (Buchy et al., 2000: 33-36).

Type	Characteristics	Examples	Advice
Individual management (No participation)	Private ownership (or leasehold) and management. Usually managed primarily to meet owners' economic needs.	Agricultural and pastoral properties	Good stewards of the land need recognition. Needs for information, education — difficult for owners to know acts, policies, technical advice relevant to their activities. Many can't afford good NRM.
Community-based management	Land or a resource is owned and managed collectively, with or without any government/industry financial support. Participants' identities are usually fixed by their connection with the resource. Management may be for economic or other needs.	Indigenous community land management Indigenous Protected Areas Community nature conservation schemes (on land purchased for conservation)	Cannot be initiated by non-members, but can benefit from facilitation, financial and practical supports. Relies on community capacity in human and other resources. Works best where members are closely bonded by kinship or common purpose. Internal conflicts or non-cooperation can jeopardise management.
Community collective activity	Voluntary, few or loose stipulations on membership. May have some government financial or in-kind support. Often activity-based (emphasising on-ground works). Works across private land or private/public tenure combinations.	Stewardship groups (Landcare, rivercare, bushcare, parkcare, dune care, coastcare) Community Environmental Monitoring groups (saltwatch, waterwatch) Some local environment/conservation groups	Opportunity to extend management to areas and issues crossing agency responsibility and private property boundaries. Benefits and complexities of voluntary labour — high economic value of contributed hours, has to be self-directed (may not be comprehensive or match agency priorities). Contribution of local and cultural knowledges. Excellent avenue for social learning and social influence in consideration and practice of NRM. Many group members are more interested in on-ground projects than abstract discussion (environmental groups excepted). Resourcing assists group effectiveness. Agency roles need to be supporting, enabling. Risk of member burnout. Inter-generational roles through school children.







Appendix C: Museums and Community Engagement poster (Wills et al., 2005)



Appendix D: Basin Bytes Evaluation Report: Executive Summary



Basin Bytes Evaluation Report



UNIVERSITY
OF TASMANIA



*Tasmanian Institute of
Agricultural Research*

Joanna Wills

Committing to Place Research Project

University of Tasmania
December 2004

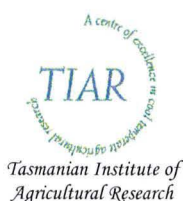
Basin Bytes Evaluation Report



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



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DISCLAIMER:

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Industry Partners involved in this research project.

The research was approved by the Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, Reference Number H7065.

This evaluation report is an output of the Committing to Place Research Project, an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project involving the National Museum of Australia, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the University of Tasmania.

Social researchers from the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania are working with project developers from both institutions to provide evaluation and research into specific projects focusing on environment, natural resource management and sense of place issues.

The Committing to Place Research Team bring a variety of disciplinary and practical skills to the project, including: rural and environmental sociology, extension and outreach, education, cultural geography, environmental and public history, anthropology, museum studies, and social research methods. Team members are:

- Prof Frank Vanclay
- Dr Ruth Lane, RMIT (prev NMA)
- Dr Ian Coates, NMA
- Damian Lucas, Research Fellow
- Jo Wills, PhD Candidate
- Sophie Henry, PhD Candidate

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The primary author of this report is Jo Wills. It is part of her PhD that is attached to the Linkage Grant project. Other Committing to Place team members have made invaluable contributions and suggestions.

Executive Summary

Project information

Basin Bytes is an outreach initiative of the Public Programs and ICT Divisions of the National Museum of Australia (NMA). The project engages communities within the Murray-Darling Basin in digital photography, documentation and storytelling activities that explore issues of place, community and environment. The NMA contracts a locally based facilitator who distributes digital cameras, runs workshops and oversees the project as it develops. Participants load their images and stories onto an online database. Staff at the NMA then transfer this material to web templates to form online community galleries on the NMA website.

Basin Bytes is one of a suite of outreach initiatives that the NMA is developing under the auspices of the Murray-Darling Basin Project. The activities comprising the Murray-Darling Basin Project are being studied by the *Committing to Place* Research Team from the University of Tasmania (UTAS) with support from an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project grant in partnership with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) and the NMA. The *Committing to Place* Research Team are examining the capacity of IT-based outreach activities to inspire and motivate community participation in natural resource management (NRM) and cultural heritage activities. As part of this work, researchers are engaged in evaluating the development, implementation, and reception of these outreach projects.

To date (December 2004), two *Basin Bytes* projects have been completed – one in Echuca (Vic) and one in Wentworth (NSW). Jo Wills has undertaken the evaluation research for both *Basin Bytes* projects. This report uses this research to reflect on the use of evaluation in these projects, the potential for the project and the associated technology to be participatory, to promote NRM and cultural heritage issues, and to maintain ongoing relevance with the participant communities.

Research methodology

The evaluation research has been conducted using an action research approach, and an appreciation of a participatory approach to community projects. It also draws on the principles of community cultural development (CCD). Qualitative, multi-stakeholder evaluation at a variety of stages throughout the project has resulted in the collection of a rich source of research data. The participatory approach to data collection has meant that the research has influenced the project outcomes and development. Indeed, it has been crucial to the project evolution: the evaluator has been in the field and given ongoing feedback to project developers during the development of the pilot projects.

Project development

Identifying a suitable community partner is crucial to the success of the project. The first *Basin Bytes* in Echuca was run with minimal community connections other than those developed with this project specifically in mind. Most of the participants in Echuca were recruited via school networks and this hampered the anticipated workshop format for the project. Further, the project experienced significant delays in database development and availability, and camera distribution. The Echuca facilitator had a community cultural development background and used his experience to help build participants' skills. However, although participants appreciated the project concept, some were unsure how their stories were relevant and how they could contribute

to the aims of the project. Others were disillusioned by delays and technical issues. The website was well received, although it was launched some time after the students had submitted their images, and this time lag resulted in a degree of disengagement with the project.

The second *Basin Bytes* in Wentworth was developed with the benefit of the learnings from Echuca, and with more support from the local community. After hearing a Committing to Place Research Team presentation about *Basin Bytes* at a conference in Broken Hill, a local arts worker expressed interest in the project. He took this project to the local council and secured their support. The Wentworth project was themed specifically in relation to the local watercourses and the natural environment, and the facilitator had an NRM background. Participants came from a range of backgrounds and were self-selecting, and all used the workshops to good effect. The project was also linked to a range of other artistic endeavours and events and thus fitted in with the types of project that are often run in Wentworth.

Key learnings

By working in a collaborative and continuous capacity, the evaluation provided researchers with useful information. It clearly identified that the way the project was implemented and run directly affected the range and content of the material generated by participants for the *Basin Bytes* web galleries. Further, it highlighted the importance of considering the experiences of project participants in a way similar to the requirement of considering the experiences of museum visitors when designing museum exhibitions. The project's ability to influence community capacity and inspire participation in future projects relies on clearly identifying both institutional and community needs and then meeting expectations.

From the outputs of the first two *Basin Bytes* projects, it is clear that communities in places with different physical attributes and features can generate distinctly different expressions of place. However, these differences should not necessarily be translated as some communities being more committed to issues of an environmental nature than others. Rather, it indicates that physical and social landscape dimensions are important considerations when choosing communities for projects that have a focus on place.

There is strong evidence from the material produced in both projects that NRM and cultural heritage projects can be successful as a way of exploring participants' sense of place and promoting discussion and consideration of environmental issues. However, given the visual emphasis which underlies the lasting output of these projects, there is potential for content with a strong visual element to overshadow material produced by participants with less developed artistic and technical skills. As the project also includes storytelling and documentation, perhaps enhancing discussion of these elements within the community workshops and their presentation on the website could also enhance participants' experiences.

Improvements and recommendations

A full list of recommendations is provided in Chapters 9 and 10. Crucial issues include:

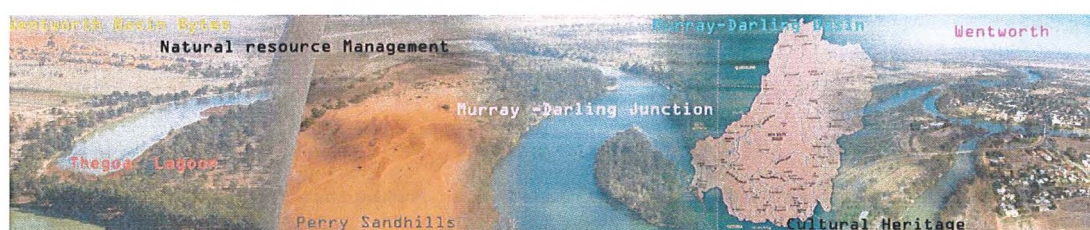
- Developing a greater flexibility regarding project parameters, particularly in response to the needs of participants, including their age range and potential interest in varying media (which do not need to be confined to photography alone and could extend to input into website design).
- Enhancing the website's interactive functionality, particularly if the technology is being used in a participatory capacity.

- Clearly articulating an exit strategy. This is crucial to the maintenance of community relationships. Participants in each *Basin Bytes* expressed an interest in the project's continuance, which suggests there is potential for developing long-term relationships with participant communities.
- Reviewing the process of how communities are selected. The selection process could contribute to the project's participatory goals and work with communities in a more collaborative context.
- Refining the logistics and equipment issues. Project timing, clear information, workshop planning, and technology that works, are issues crucial for project success. Ensuring that these aspects of the project are in place before engaging participants is crucial. In particular, delays or deficiencies in technology can severely compromise the thematic and/or empowerment goals of the project.

Basin Bytes websites

Echuca: www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/echuca_basin_bytes

Wentworth: www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/wentworth_basin_bytes



Building capacity for community engagement in museums and NRM agencies

Final report of the Committing to Place project



*Damian Lucas, Frank Vanclay, Ruth Lane,
Jo Wills, Ian Coates and Sophie Henry*

Committing to Place Research Project
Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research
University of Tasmania
August 2005



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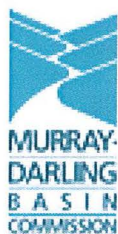


Tasmanian Institute of
Agricultural Research

Final Report



Australian Government
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Agricultural Research

DISCLAIMER:

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Industry Partners involved in this research project.

This final report is an output of the Committing to Place Research Project, an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project (LP0211420) which involved the National Museum of Australia, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the University of Tasmania.

Social researchers from the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research at the University of Tasmania worked with project developers from the NMA and MDBC to provide evaluation and research into specific projects focusing on environment, natural resource management and sense of place issues.

The Committing to Place Research Team brought a variety of disciplinary and practical skills to the project, including: rural & environmental sociology, extension & outreach, education, cultural geography, environmental & public history, anthropology, museum studies, and social research methods. Team members were:

- Prof Frank Vanclay
- Dr Ruth Lane, RMIT
- Dr Ian Coates, NMA
- Dr Damian Lucas, Research Fellow
- Jo Wills, PhD Candidate
- Sophie Henry, PhD Candidate

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The research was approved by the Southern Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, Reference Number H7065.

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Cover photo: *Native species*
Jennifer Matthews (Wentworth Basin
Bytes participant)

Executive Summary

This is the final report of the Committing to Place research project, an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant project based at the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), University of Tasmania, and conducted in partnership with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) and the National Museum of Australia (NMA). The overarching aim of the research was to investigate means of activating and maintaining community participation in natural and cultural resource initiatives in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The main research activity of the Committing to Place project was to evaluate and reflect on a series of outreach and education projects. Specifically, the four outreach activities comprising the Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project, a suite of museum outreach projects developed by the NMA in partnership with the MDBC, were investigated: *Basin Bytes*, *Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom*, *Pass the Salt*, and *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm*. In addition, a MDBC sponsored environmental education event, the *MDBC International Riverhealth Conference*, was assessed.

The Committing to Place research project considered three research questions:

1. In what ways do these outreach and education activities engage diverse communities?
2. Do these outreach and educational activities influence engagement in NRM issues?
3. What methods are useful for organisations to use in developing and implementing outreach and educational activities that are meaningful for communities?

The primary findings of the research were that:

- The MDBC and NMA should continue to cooperate on projects of mutual benefit.
- There are considerable advantages in using indirect ways to promote natural resource management (NRM).
- There are considerable advantages in developing outreach programs that integrate the principles of community engagement into the development and delivery of collaborative and participatory projects.
- Both the NMA and the MDBC could improve their institutional collaboration and community engagement processes and procedures.
- Both institutions should continue to pursue projects that utilise new communication technologies, but should be mindful of the limitations of this approach.
- There should be a continued focus on local places in outreach and extension projects, however, in order to appeal to broader audiences, there needs to be an embedding of these local stories in wider contexts.
- Evaluation should be a routine and regular part of all outreach projects, but needs to be present from inception of a project through to after completion.

Appendix F: Arts/heritage/museum professionals informally consulted

Name	Position	Institution	Country
Peter Ampt	Project Manager, FATE	University of NSW	Sydney, Australia
Margaret Birtley	CEO	Collections Council of Australia	Adelaide, Australia
Sarath Chandra Boyapati	Conservation architect	Hampi	Karnataka, India
Roz Brown	Regional Arts Development Manager	Country Arts WA	Perth, Australia
Pauline Cockerill	Curator	National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame	Alice Springs, Australia
Jeff Cody	Project Manager	Getti Institute	Hong Kong
Clare-Frances Craig	Extension Officer	Western Australian Museum	Perth, Australia
Brian Crozier	Senior Curator, Culture and Histories	Queensland Museum	Brisbane, Australia
Sue Hodges	Director	Sue Hodges Productions	Melbourne, Australia
Greg Hunt	National Manager, Waterkeepers Australia	Museum Victoria	Melbourne, Victoria
Rebecca Jones	PhD Candidate	Monash University	Gippsland, Victoria
Ruth Lane	Lecturer	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	Melbourne, Australia
Ian McShane	PhD Candidate	Swinburne Institute of Technology	Melbourne, Australia
Fiona Mohr	Museum Development Officer	Queensland Museum	Brisbane, Australia
Belinda Powells	Artistic Advisor	City Sites, Carclew Arts Centre	Adelaide, Australia
Denis Shepard	Curator	NMA	Canberra, Australia
Jonathan Sweet	Museum Studies Lecturer	Deakin University	Melbourne, Australia
Deborah Trantor	Director Regional Services	Queensland Museum	Brisbane, Australia
Greg Wallace	Manager, Museums Assistance Program	Western Australian Museum	Perth, Australia
Gamini Wijesuriya	Project Manager, (Sites Unit)	ICCROM	Rome, Italy

Appendix G: Australian Project Example Boxes

PROJECT 1

Project Name: *South Melbourne Oral History Project*
Institution: *Museum Victoria, VIC*

Oral history transforming participants and curators alike

In 1989, Museum of Victoria developed a women's oral history project in conjunction with students at women's studies students at La Trobe University. Curators drew on the advice of the Aged Services Officer in South Melbourne to identify suitable participants, and spent time prior to the interviews getting to know the 22 women (Twigg, 1993). The project, which was "conceived to support a new collection ... on women and work in the home" (Twigg, 1993: 20), was subsequently displayed at the local library.

"The women had been long accustomed to seeing what they did as ordinary and insignificant ... [They] slowly responded to our continued demonstrations of interest not only by speaking more freely and confidently of their work as housewives and mothers but by voluntarily searching out household items ... for inspection and discussion. Once this barrier had been overcome we were astonished by the rich variety of descriptions, stories, anecdotes, advice and reflections that were shared with us" (Twigg, 1993: 21).

Overseeing the project at that time was domestic technology curator Liza Dale (now Dale-Hallett) who recalled the impact the project had on both the women involved and on her own professional practice:

"What was fundamental ... was the way in which allowing people to tell their stories ... empowered those women in ways that was phenomenal. They reassessed their own lives during the process [of] interviewing and to have the ability to display their lives, even though it was done in a fairly modest way (at the local library) ... was an incredibly important community experience for those individuals and for me and the others involved in the project.

I think the power it gave me was the way in which the participation of those ... individuals not only made good stories and great history, but it changed the people involved, changed their own sense of self, their contribution, their life, their self esteem. It also affected other people – their families – they were able to see the interviewees in a different light. That's the power the museum has, to some degree – it does actually effect people to think that state museums are interested enough to want to talk to them and hear their story. It touches me that people are so humble about themselves" (Dale-Hallett, L, 2003 PhD Interview #2).



Oral history coordinator, Karen Twigg, (left) with project interview (name unknown) discussing the display at South Melbourne Library, 1990 (Twigg, 1993: 21).

PROJECT 2

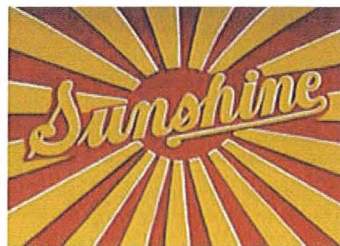
Project Name: *McKay Volunteer Project*
Institution: *Museum Victoria*

'The most outstanding volunteer project in the museum sector'
(Museums Industry Recognition Award)

Since 1996, visiting the storeroom in Scienceworks, Museum Victoria (MV,) would invariably lead to an encounter with some of the members of the McKay volunteer group. These volunteers comprise former employees of the H.V. McKay/Massey Ferguson Factory in Sunshine, Victoria and they have been working to help interpret and document an extensive collection of "13,000 images, 750 films, a large collection of objects and over 5,000 trade publications" (Fahey et.al., 2003: website). They have also contributed to the development an associated database that details information from factory departments, the factory site, factory operations and details of staff members. Their efforts total more than "six years and 5000 hours of volunteer work" (Fahey et. al., 2003: website), a labour of love imbued with good humour and good will.

"Ken Porter, a former Transport Manager at Massey Ferguson, recalled in 2002 how collecting McKay records began for him when he rescued a wooden box from a dump master in 1991" (Fahey et. al., 2003: website). He found a significant collection of material that documents working life and the manufacture of agricultural machinery; subsequently, the material was split between the University of Melbourne Archives and Scienceworks (Museum Victoria). "After the transfer of the collection to Museum Victoria in 1996, [he] gathered together a team of 23 volunteers to assist in identification and cataloguing. Twenty of these volunteers were ex-employees, some retrenched on more than one occasion, but all had a passionate interest in piecing together the history of the company. Their company involvement covers 1936 to 1996, their work spans the breadth of the enterprise (engineering, sales, parts, tool design, etc.) and equates to over 800 years of experience".

Some of the volunteers have contacted other former employees in various parts of Australia for further information and advice, and they have all contributed to the development of the Sunshine Harvester website (www.museum.vic.gov.au/sunshine) – "the first insight into the photographic collection and an accessible means for interpreting the McKay story" (Fahey et. al, 2003: website).



Images from the H.V. McKay Collection and Sunshine Harvester Website
[Images curtesy Museum Victoria, 2005: website; photographers unknown]

PROJECT 3

Project Name: *Women on Farms Gathering*
Institution: *Museum Victoria, Vic.*

Creative collecting recognises women in agriculture

The Women on Farms Gathering (WOFG) began in 1990. This “non profit organisation ... [is] committed to supporting farming women through networks, meetings, farm based activities and the annual Gathering (Women on Farms Gathering, 2000: website). Liza Dale-Hallett, Senior Curator for Technology and Sustainable Futures at Museum Victoria, has been attending the WOFG since 1993. She responded to an approach by the WOFG group “to assist them in preserving the history of the Gatherings, collecting their stories and acknowledging the role of rural women in Victoria (Dale-Hallett & Diffey, 2006:12-13). It was a collection proposal that came with a twist: at each annual Gathering a new item is added to their collection and a new patchwork square added to their banner. The acquisition, thus, required an institutional commitment to an ongoing process of collection and an ongoing relationship with the WOFG – in short, it required recognition that the object was ‘alive’.

“What emerged at one of the gatherings in 2000, just by chance, was that one of the participants pulled together what they called icons from all the past gatherings which are these special objects that are given at the close of the gathering [and] which are given as a symbol and a message about the importance of those gatherings and the role of women. It could be an irrigation shovel, a cow pat, a computer – something that represented some the stories and issues facing rural women. After ten or more of these gatherings, it occurred that there might be an opportunity to display all of this... and tell the story about the gatherings.

That all emerged from the gatherings; I didn't initiate it. I was only involved at the point after they had started to do this and wondered where these things would be kept after they displayed them ... They are symbols but they also represent, tangibly, the importance of the gatherings – which in themselves have been very important ... in bringing rural women together and giving them a voice and confidence. It seemed obvious to me that this was a state collection because it came ... from ... all sorts of places across Victoria and represents the story of Victorian women.

The thing about the project was that it came from the community. It was then [decided] that the best way of making that happen was to develop a cultural partnership. The rationale behind formalising it was that the first step was getting this material accepted. Many people didn't think it was appropriate that the museum should collect it. We then initiated a formal legal arrangement between VWFG, which is ... a community, and the museum ... The material will be made available on an annual basis, and ... the museum has obligations to communicate and make that collection available, to interpret it [and] gather the history of gatherings” (Dale-Hallett, L, 2003. PhD Interview #2).

PROJECT 4

Project Name: *The Access Gallery*
Institution: Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, Vic.

Bringing people together and affirming new lives

The Access Gallery at Museum Victoria's Immigration Museum is an exhibition space in which communities tell their own stories:

"The purpose of this space is to encourage various groups, including those from regional and rural communities, to create their own exhibitions and tell their own stories that investigate issues and themes relating to immigration, cultural diversity, cultural heritage and identity.

The Community Gallery also provides communities and community groups with an avenue to showcase their skills, traditions and culture, and for individuals to acquire first-hand experience in planning, developing and mounting their exhibitions" (Immigration Museum, Museum Victoria, 2003: website).

Museum Victoria Director, Dr Patrick Greene, values the collaborative methodology that the gallery has promoted with regards to migrant community engagement:

"I would point to the Immigration Museum and the Access Gallery, which has established a really fantastic methodology of working with ... communities reflecting the multicultural nature of Victoria. On Sunday, we opened the Buchenwald boys. It is a really powerful exhibition and is absolutely the sort of thing we should be doing. It is not an easy subject, and for that reason alone we should be doing it. But the involvement of the Buchenwald boys themselves, the partnership with the Holocaust Museum and Resources Centre, that is what makes the exhibition.

What is powerful is when you meet the people for whom this is an affirmation of their culture, it is an affirmation of their new life ... bringing together families and friends, and I'm proud that we are part of a museum that can do that sort of thing ... The important thing is for the museum to have the right attitudes, to have a series of methodologies, which then apply in different ways and in different circumstances. There isn't a one size fits all (Greene, P, 2005. PhD Interview #15).

PROJECT 5

Project Name: *Beirut to Baghdad*
Institution: NSW Migration Heritage Centre, Powerhouse Museum, NSW

Diversity and inclusion: Arab Australian's interpreting collections

Engaging Lebanese and Arab Australian communities formed the basis for the Powerhouse's *Wattan Project* and associated exhibition called *Beirut to Baghdad: communities, collecting and culture*. The project drew on a community cultural development process and involved inviting the community to view collections and reinterpret them from their perspective. It was a process that raised many issues, including the issue repatriation and identity, but also brought about community empowerment, particularly for the young people involved (Chidiac, 2005).

In an inspiring conference presentation that showcased the interpretive potential and power of video interviews, project officer, Alissar Chidiac, (2005:2-3), noted:

"A Critical Focus Group of community members was selected to explore questions and strategies with the curators, Paul Donnelly and myself. Was it possible to 'reframe' the cultural materials through Arab eyes? ...The exhibition was described as beautiful and intimate, with community members 'sharing memories and associations' in relation to cultural and historical objects. This is a typical approach to negotiating cultural diversity and migration heritage within cultural institutions - a far more 'containable' approach to community participation ... The sheer number of videos in Beirut to Baghdad made it less contained - there was room for differing views and different experiences, opening up diverse issues, stories, unpredictable connections and contradictions".

Carol Scott, Evaluation and Visitor Research Manager at the Powerhouse, recalls the impact of this inclusive curatorial approach on the interpretation:

"The curators for this exhibition did something quite interesting. They laid the material out and then they invited people in from the Arabic community (which is in itself a first) to comment on the objects. We got some wonderful stories: 'I remember my grandmother having those pots when she lived in Lebanon and she used it for such and such ... and when we came to Australia we had to leave with very little but we bought one of those with us.' So in fact, the interpretation of this exhibition was actually the community commenting on the collection from the perspective of their memories and their associations" (Scott, 2005. PhD Interview # 8).

PROJECT 6

Project Name: *Keeping culture and the Aboriginal Outreach Project*
Institution: Australian Museum, NSW

Keeping culture alive

Keeping places transcend the traditional role of museums, and for many Aboriginal people, this difference is important. Roy Barker, co-founder of Goondee Keeping Place in Lightning Ridge, NSW, for example, explained:

"we try to explain to people that it [isn't] a museum. See a lot of them said we don't want to be ... portrayed, if you like, as monkeys or whatever in a museum and a lot of them didn't understand the word keeping place ... When they realised it was a keeping place to keep our culture alive, there was a big change of attitude towards keeping places" (Australian Museum, 2001: website - audio interview with Roy and June Barker).

The Aboriginal Heritage Unit (AHU) at the Australian Museum developed the *Keeping Culture* project to assist Aboriginal communities interested in developing a Keeping Place or Cultural Centre. The project was developed in conjunction with "Aboriginal representatives from four very different Cultural Centres and Keeping Places in New South Wales" (Australian Museum, 2003: website). In order to develop keeping places, however, Aboriginal communities need skills and training. Since 1997, the AHU has run an outreach program that combines museum training with a staged approach to developing and running a keeping place. AHU Manager, Phil Gordon, and staff set themselves the task to approach the 150 communities in NSW to participate in this program. The project recognises that "each development is a unique response to community wishes and needs and as such these facilities are more likely to be useful to their community, and thus to be successful" (Gordon, 2005: 359). Implicit in this is the recognition that a "one size fits all" approach to setting up and operating ... Keeping Places" is inappropriate (Australian Museum, 2003: website).

The idea behind *Keeping culture* and the outreach program reflects Gordon's pragmatic view about the reach of cultural heritage programs in relation to Aboriginal communities:

"We talk about Aboriginal communities, obviously, but that could be anything from an organisation right through to a family group ... People within Aboriginal communities have a whole range of interests, like most communities, and so therefore we only deal with the group of that community that is interested in cultural issues as it affects museums" (Gordon, P, 2005. PhD Interview #11).

Further, Gordon's believes that that useful community consultation with those interested communities should have a practical and tangible outcome:

"That's the interesting part of consultation – it's about bringing them with you, allowing them to grow themselves as cultural people ... and then letting them make some judgements ... Consultation is not about spending lots of time with people. It's about giving them the skills that they can then use to analyse your proposal and give you feedback" (Gordon, P, 2005. PhD Interview #11).

PROJECT 7

Project Name: Indigenous Gallery
Institution: Lady Denman Maritime Museum, NSW

Gaining permission to tell other peoples' stories

The Lady Denman Maritime Museums is a small community museum on the south coast of NSW. Contract historian Roslyn Russell was employed to develop an exhibition about the area's indigenous population. Projects that utilise contract historians or museum curators often require a degree of negotiation in terms of the interpretive scope. These negotiations necessitate engagement with a variety of different communities – those working within the museums and those whom they wish to represent. Russell recalled the process of negotiating with the local indigenous community regarding the appropriateness of developing such an exhibition:

"When they started had a meeting with community. Non indigenous people were asked to leave the room so that they could decide whether or not to allow us to tell their story. We went back in and they said yes, and from that time on they were fantastic!

The result has been that as many people from the community as we could find are represented there – their photos are in, their stories are there, and I believe (from what I hear) that people are happy to bring them here to show them their story... in terms of the attachment of the people to the gallery it has been successful" (Russell, R, 2005. PhD Interview #5).

PROJECT 8

Project Name: *Many Rhymes, One Rhythm*
Institution: National Museum of Australia

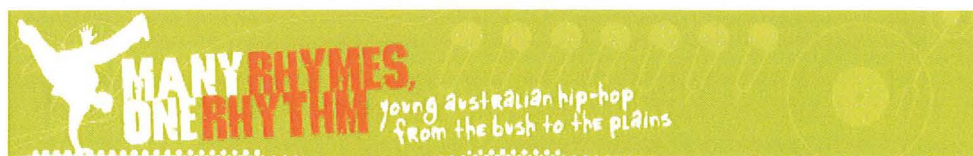
Using hip-hop to collect young peoples' stories about place

In 2005, the NMA Public Programs and Education sections developed a project called Many Rhymes, One Rhythm as part of the CrocFestivals program. *CrocFest* promotes positive health, education and social messages via festivals held around Australia, and include indigenous and non indigenous students (Cultural Perspectives Pty Ltd., 2002). Project developer Adam Blackshaw decided the medium of hip hop would be a creative way to collect stories about how young people perceived their surrounding environment and life in rural and remote communities.

"In its simplest form, hip hop is spoken word set to a beat, which allows for the telling of rich stories, opinions and perspectives ... We were very excited when [Morganics and Wire MC and video artist Finton Mahony] agreed to go on tour" ... Our team ... set off on a gruelling two months on the road, visiting seven locations in six states and territories, recording rap songs with around 1600 young people from over 60 schools. We reached kids as far north as Saibai Island and from as far south as Tasmania" (NMA, 2006: website).

"In individual 45-minute sessions, groups of young people were asked to workshop ideas and develop eight lines of lyrics to a pre-prepared rhythm. These were then recorded and filmed. The next group would then add their lyrics and so on creating a kind of hip hop chain letter ... The diversity of students, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and their experiences are reflected in the lyrics to their rap songs" (NMA, 2006: Many Rhymes, One Rhythm website). The lyrics from the Swan Hill workshops (NMA, 2006: website), for example read:

*We're from Swan Hill
On the Murray River
In the Mallee Region
In northern Victoria
Catching Murray Cod
When they're in season
In the future I'd like to be
A copper, explosives expert
Architect
Choreographer
I wanna be rich, happy, have good friends
Achieve our goals, find the right blend
I wish we had underage nightclubs
And hot boys
Crazy roller skating rinks for
Us to enjoy
No drugs, no fights, so we can
Live our life
Strict gun laws, yeah, that's right
Protect our native animals day and night
And treat the Murray right*



Graphic banner for the Many Rhymes, One Rhythm website
[Image courtesy NMA, 2005: website]

PROJECT 9

Project Name: *Pass the Salt*
Institution(s): Museum of the Riverina, NSW & NMA

A collaborative approach to talking about salinity

Pass the Salt is an online exhibition about salinity developed collaboratively between the National Museum of Australia, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the Museum of the Riverina in Wagga Wagga, NSW. By engaging interested participants from the Wagga Wagga in the development of local stories, the project “explores places, examines objects and tells people's stories about salinity in the Wagga Wagga region, New South Wales” (NMA, 2005: website).

In an evaluation of the project, *Committing to Place* team member, Lucas, noted:

“The online exhibition, through its focus on personal responses to salinity, communicated the issue in a manner that was engaging and understandable to broad audiences. Much public communication about salinity has been framed by technical and scientific approaches. This exhibition highlighted the human dimensions of this issue, which allowed broader audiences to connect with it. By presenting a broad range of active responses to salinity, the exhibition promoted the benefits of engaging in actions to promote sustainability. A key strength was its portrayal of a wide diversity of methods employed by community members engaging with salinity in practical and tangible ways. In documenting and exhibiting positive environmental action, the project validated and legitimated the environmental activities undertaken by individuals and groups. The involvement of the NMA, a prestigious cultural institution, was very important for this role of validating environmental action.

The collaboration between the three organisations contributed to the success of the project, with each partner gaining specific benefits from the collaboration. While the input from the MDBC provided contemporary perspectives on salinity and access to local NRM networks, the involvement of the Museum of the Riverina provided a strong grounding in local issues and local networks” (Lucas et al, 2005: 25-26).



Graphic banner for the Pass the Salt website
[Image courtesy NMA, 2005: website]

PROJECT 10

Project Name: *Museum Resource Centre Network*
Institution: *Arts Queensland/ Queensland Museum*

A hub in the provision of cultural heritage services

The Museum Resource Centre Network (MRCN) in Queensland is a collaborative approach to the provision of regional heritage services between the Queensland Museum, Arts Queensland and various local government authorities.

The state has been divided into 6 broad geographical regions and, where possible, a Museum Development Officer (MDO) is employed and located within each region. Locating staff in regional communities contributes to developing a number of the key ingredients within the participatory imperative:

"their involvement in all aspects of museum activity in the region means that a trusting relationship can develop ... The MDO can become familiar with specific collections in their domain. Reciprocally, the museum workers appreciate the MDOs' role more holistically ... each party gains confidence in the other, and mutual respect can flourish' (Birtley and Sweet, 2002 cited in Warden and Scott, 2004: 4).

In a recent strategic planning project, the MRCN identified its mission as "to identify the significant cultural heritage collections in regional Queensland and to advise on and assist with their preservation and documentation" (Queensland Museum & Arts Queensland, 2004: 2). From this mission two associated goals have emerged: to "Identify significant cultural heritage collections; [and] to advise on actions to preserve and document the identified collections" (Queensland Museum & Arts Queensland, 2004: 2).



**Queensland's Network of six Museum Resource Centres covers an extensive area and provides heritage advisory services to a range of heritage communities
(Image courtesy Robinson, 2000: website)**

PROJECT 11

Project Name: *MuseumLink*
Institution: Western Australian Museum, WA

Museums responding to contemporary issues

The idea of a 'rapid response' gallery for exhibiting community responses to contemporary issues is not unique to the Western Australian Museum. It was, however, an approach used between 2001-2002 when curator, Matt Trinca (now employed at the NMA), was employed there as a curator:

"For the last two years I've been working on a program called MuseumLink which was avowedly about more quick-hit products for audiences throughout Western Australia and also on more contemporary issues. Everything got shoved into that bundle of ideas! One of the projects that we worked on was in response to the Tampa crisis. We developed a program at the insistence of people outside the museum and who came to me and said:

'we feel disempowered by the debate that is going on in Australian politics at the moment ... we would like to ... argue on behalf of refugees, and on behalf of Australia being embracing of refugees coming to this country, specifically people arriving in boats. We're artists and we work with a community group in Fremantle, and we'd like to be working with a big cultural institution that has a kind of presence and authority in the social and cultural landscape of this place called Western Australia and Perth'.

So we developed a program that was based around some artwork, an art installation and then another part of that community group did a performance piece. Another part, which was also linked with another university and some of the people in Fremantle, developed some basic text that would go on supporting panels that would be around the art installation. We put it into the best space the museum's got ... the lobby, which is a large, glass open space. The show went in there and we had the performance in there – there was [also] an audio piece ... that played during ... the 6 weeks to 2 months that the show was up.

We had really good responses from visitors to it – it provoked response. We had people saying 'I hate this, why is the museum doing this?' We had people inside the museum saying 'we shouldn't be doing this – we're meant to be an institution that's above politics and this is so politically volatile in contemporary life'. I thought it was a very complex little project, but really resonant for lots of different reasons. People had to confront why they thought the museum wasn't the place for it. People in the community were saying 'I can't believe the museum has let me do this'. People came up to me and said, 'this is terrific that this happened, how do we do this in the future?'" (Trinca, M, 2003. PhD Interview #1).

PROJECT 12

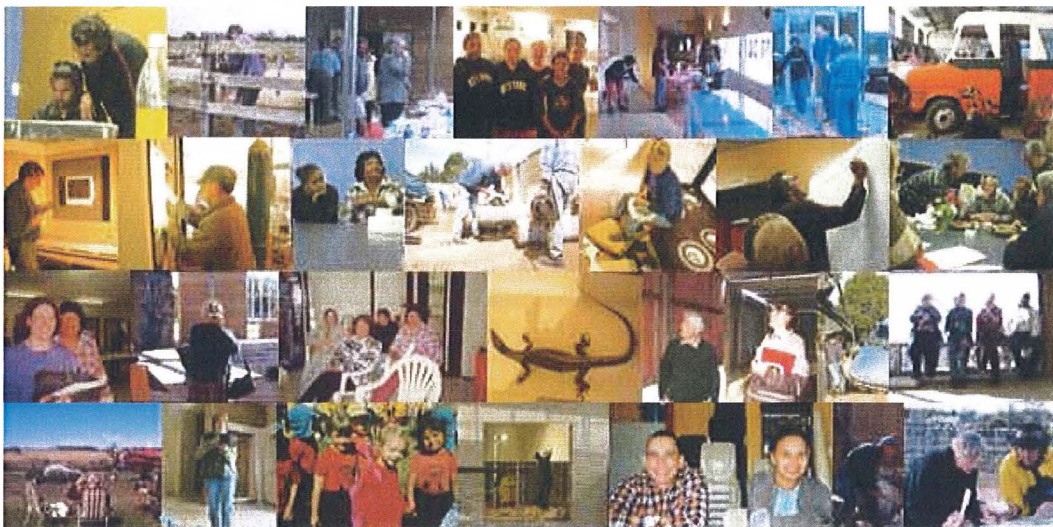
Project Name: *The Kodja Place*
Institution: The Kodja Place, Kojonup WA.

One story, many voices

The Kodja Place is an interpretive centre located in Kojonup, a small farming community in south Western Australia. It was “built to strengthen reconciliation between the communities that make up [the] community, [and] has involved hundreds of local people, across the spectrum of this vibrant community” (Kodja Place, 2003: website). This community is a mixture of Noongyar (Aboriginal) and Wadjelas (non Aboriginal) communities including English Maori and Italian families, and they have all contributed their stories to ensure the development of centre represents multiple voices and perspective.

Project developers highlight a number of important elements in the project, in particular the development of the relationship between the Noongyar and Wadjelas communities, which took over four years, and the decision to “put locals in the driving seat by adopting community-led curating and locally driven project management” (McVee et al., 2003: 2). A commitment to include these groups in the project and build trust with them over time meant that they eventually gained access to information and cultural knowledge that enhanced the centre and project. (McVee et al, 2003). Further, the project’s a contemporary dimension allows participants to regard their cultural heritage as a living and growing tradition and enables new residents to contribute as well.

“Part of the ethos of the project has been that it is never finished - we want it to grow and evolve so that it will continue to reflect present-day Kojonup, including the changing people and landscape that are always redefining the place” (McVee et al, 2003: 3).



The many voices of the Kojonup community can be heard at the Kodja Place
[Image courtesy Kodja Place, 2003: website]

PROJECT 13

Project Name: *Sharing their Legacy*
Institutions: History Trust of South Australia
17 local history societies and museums in SA
Department of Veteran Affairs

A model for collaborative projects

In 2001, the History Trust of South Australia worked with the Department of Veteran Affairs and 17 local history societies and museums in South Australia to develop "Sharing their Legacy". This project that sought to engage these groups in the task of uncovering and exhibiting community stories and memories of war. Many of these stories are now available via the History Trust website, and have been the impetus for further research activities.

Sharing their Legacy highlights the benefits to both community and industry in the development of collaborative projects. Interviews with some of the participants illustrate the level of engagement and creativity that occurred during this project. Ann Herraman from the Mt Lofty and Districts Historical Society, for example, noted creative display methods and interpretation:

"One man brought in his own display on corrugated cardboard with drawing pins and we used it! ... During the war one woman knitted half a sock on the downward journey into Adelaide and the other half on the way up, so she knitted half a sock for our display" (History Trust of South Australia, 2003: website).

Local History Officer at Holdfast Bay Historical Society, Dieuwke Jessop, used a range of engagement techniques to get the research underway:

"To begin the project, I made an appeal in the local paper, but got no response. Then we made direct approaches to people suggested by the local RSL. Our Society volunteers 'volunteered' their stories and memorabilia. Local council records held in our archives were a rich source of information on council wartime activities" (History Trust of South Australia, 2003: website).

Community History Officer, Amanda James, identified four key elements within the project:

- "1 A common theme, with each participant working on an individual project
2. The collaborative nature of the project and opportunities for networking between participants
3. Centralised coordination of the project, and
4. Ongoing advice and assistance and the provision of training as required" (James, 2003: website).

Further, James (2003: website) suggested:

"A collaborative project gives participants confidence and a foundation on which to model their next project. Skills learned are central to community history and museum development. Collaboration sets new standards for participants. It raises their expectations of what they can do and gets new people in the community involved."



**Material collected for the Sharing the Legacy project at Mt Lofty & District Historical Society
[Images courtesy History Trust of South Australia, 2005: website; photographer unknown]**

PROJECT: 14

Project: *Community Collections*
Institution: Museum Victoria, Victoria

People's passions – community collections

"Community Collections is a fascinating insight into the often hidden passions of all kinds of Victorians. It gives Melbourne Museum's visitors a chance to glimpse other people's collecting obsessions, and allows collectors to share their unique and precious personal collections! ...This is a great opportunity to share your unique collection, along with the knowledge and pleasure which comes from carefully building and caring for it." (Museum Victoria, 2006: website).

Museum Victoria's new Director, Dr Patrick Greene, bought a wealth of experience and ideas from the Museum of Manchester to the Australian museum community. One of these, Community Collections, has proved to be a great success:

"An example I introduced from my experience in the UK, is our new community collections. It is something that was developed in the UK called People Shows, and it was part of this transition which has taken place over 10 years which says there are lots of experts out there, lots of collectors in all sorts of extraordinary areas. You give people the opportunity ... to display [their] stuff in the museum. It's proven a huge success in the UK; we did it in Manchester very successfully.

I suggested it here when I arrived ... and it was so successful that we are doing it again except that we are giving each of the exhibitions a longer time because they were just too short last time. But it is a two way process, the people who put on the exhibitions are thrilled to place their exhibition on display in the museum – they get a hell of a lot out of it. The museum gets a lot out of it because there are classes of material we've never collected. Sometimes it is material that we quite like, so we suggest to them that if they stop collecting, they might like to think of us in the future. And, that has certainly happened since we started in Manchester and here as well" (Greene, P, 2005. PhD Interview 15).



One of Museum Victoria's 'community collectors'.
Image courtesy Museum Victoria, 2005: website; Photographer: Ben Healley]

PROJECT 15

Project Name: *Signature Quilt*
Institution: National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, NT

A regional museum celebrates women's work and achievements

The National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame (NPWHF) in Alice Springs was established in 1993, eight years after its counterpart the Pioneer Women's Hut in Tumbarumba began on in southwest NSW. Both institutions have used quilting to convey the significance of women's work – volunteers at the Pioneer Women's Hut established the National Quilt Register which "documents the stories of over 1,000 Australian quilts, and the lives and work of the (mostly) women who made them" (Winkworth, 2005: 1).

At the end of 2000, quilter and NPWHF committee member, Jan Millington, initiated the Signature Quilt project at the NPWHF:

"to celebrate the achievements of Australian women over the last 100 years ... NPWHF Curator Pauline Cockrill researched the names and addresses of the women to be approached [to sign it] ... Honorary Secretary Val Mitchell handled the bulk of the correspondence. Jan Millington and fellow quilter Julie Heller spent many hours putting the quilts together and searching for appropriate fabric" (NPWHF, 2006: website).

"Each quilt is made up of calico squares, all signed by Australian women firsts or those who have made significant achievements within their field, with alternate patches of patterned fabric, appropriate to the signatory's field. So fashioned, the quilt will be representative of both a traditional women's craft of the 19th century as well as making visible women's achievements of the 20th and 21st centuries - a 'Patchwork of Empowerment' ... One is displayed at their headquarters in Alice Springs ... while the other has been raffled to raise funds for their new building, a permanent public facility to commemorate the pioneering women of Australia ..." (NPWHF, 2006: website).



Four patches from the quilt (left to right):

Ruth E Wilson (first woman pilot to own and operate an air balloon)
Carol Martin (first indigenous woman to be elected to an Australian Parliament)
Layne Beachley (first woman to win 5 world surfing titles)
Sue McGinn (first woman to be appointed to the Australian Dairy Farmers' Board)

[Images and information courtesy NPWHF, 2006: website]

PROJECT 16

Project Name: *Committing to Place*
Institutions: National Museum of Australia
Murray-Darling Basin Commission

Evaluating the higher purpose of museum projects

The Committing to Place (CTP) project was collaborative at an institutional, academic and project level. Reflecting on the dimensions of the project, Principle Researcher and rural sociologist, Professor Frank Vanclay (2004: 544) reflected:

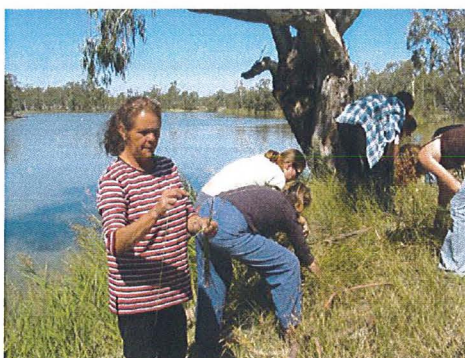
"as far as we are aware, this is the first project that combines a community-based interpretive approach with the use of innovative communications technologies and educational programmes to promote community participation in NRM. One of the primary roles of the Committing to Place Research Team is to consider how successful the NMA activities are in achieving that goal."

Using a variety of evaluation techniques to reflect on the benefits and delivery of a series of NRM-based museum outreach and education projects, research team members considered three principle research questions:

1. "In what ways do these outreach and education activities engage diverse communities?
2. Do these outreach and educational activities influence engagement in NRM issues?
3. What methods are useful for organisations to use in developing and implementing outreach and educational activities that are meaningful for communities?" (Lucas et al., 2005).

In total 4 museum projects and 2 education projects were evaluated as part of the CTP project. This included substantial engagement with project participants in at least two of the project, research that drew on an action research methodology. This was to ensure a range of views and perspectives were included in the analysis, and also acknowledge the evolving nature of these research projects and the ways people engaged with them over time.

Key findings were highlighted in the executive summary of the CTP final report and made reference to the "considerable advantages in developing outreach programs that integrate the principles of community engagement into the development and delivery of collaborative and participatory projects" (Lucas et al., 2005: iii). This recommendation reflected the provision of guiding principles for developing participatory museum projects. Other findings related to the importance of the local aspect of project development, the usefulness of ongoing evaluative processes through project development and the potential for cultural approaches to NRM issues to be of benefit in promoting NRM issues.



"Native Species" Photographer: Jennifer Matthews, (2004 Wentworth Basin Bytes participant)
[Image courtesy NMA, website, 2005].

PROJECT 17

Project Name: *The FATE Project*
Institution: Australian Museum (now University of New South Wales)

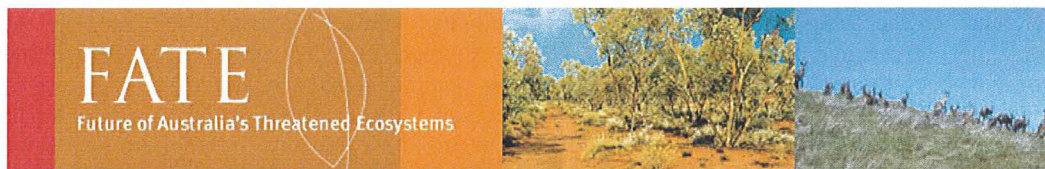
Scientific collaboration, museums and NRM

The FATE (Future of Australia's Threatened Ecosystems) program was initiated at the Australian Museum, NSW in 2002, but has since been transferred to the University of New South Wales. It is a collaborative science based research project, and as such reflect traditional interests in museums. Its concern with environmental issues and interest in working collaboratively with landholders, however, means there are genuine participatory dimensions to the FATE program.

In it's original conception FATE aimed to investigate "how commercial use of native species in Australia's threatened ecosystems could enhance the long-term conservation of Australian biodiversity and through this process ... increase the resilience and economic viability of rural and regional Australia" FATE, 2005: website). This research premise was based on an action research model, whereby the project developers aimed to work with land holders in Australian rangelands. The target community, therefore, is landholders working in environmentally damaged and fragile areas. Project manager Peter Ampt (2002: 7) highlighted participatory appraisal methods as a key methodology for this research:

"groups of land-holders will be encouraged to form wildlife management conservancies (WMCs). Cooperative land management arrangements will be encouraged within each WMC following a similar approach to the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve program (Brunkhorst et al 1997)"

There are a number of components to the FATE project. One of these is 'greenleasing' in which landholders pool available land for use in specific NRM related projects and rehabilitation and which is managed by a central group. Another project involves investigating the commercial potential of kangaroos, traditionally seen as a pest by many landholders.



FATE graphic banner used on the FATE website
[Image courtesy, FATE, 2005: website]

PROJECT 18

Project Name: *Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom*
Institution: National Museum of Australia
Murray-Darling Basin Commission

Combining civics education with environmental issues

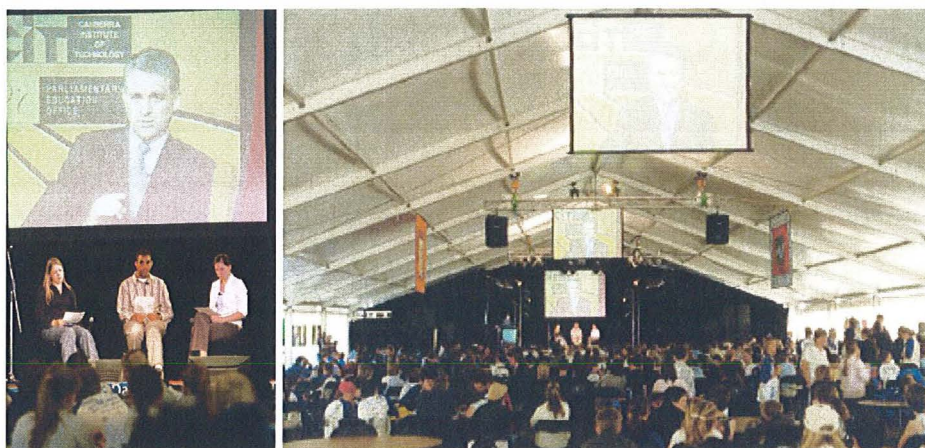
The education section of the NMA has been running a secondary school level project called *TalkBack Classroom* in conjunction with Old Parliament House for a number of years. In this civics based project, three students are trained to research and interview politicians on particular subjects. Once they have completed intensive training, they then interview the politician in the NMA's in-house broadcast studio in front of a student audience. Prior to 2004, this was also screened on ABC FlyTV (Lane et.al, 2004).

Under the auspices of the CTP project, one of the 2004 *TalkBack Classrooms* was themed in relation to environmental issues. This experience changed a number of the project dimensions. Rather than run the program in-house, this particular project was held in conjunction with a major youth environmental event - the Riverhealth Conference which is held biannually on the banks of the Murray River in Mildura, Victoria. As per previous project, three students were selected and trained in journalism skills. Then, before an audience in Mildura, they interviewed then Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. John Anderson who was in the NMA broadcast studio.

Although a range of problems emerged (see Lane et. al, 2004), the idea for an expanded audience that connected to a community of interest, clearly provided additional access and learning opportunities for those involved (including the project developers). For the three participating students, this active learning project gave them a range of skills and experiences. Evaluation research conducted as part of the CTP project illustrated the influential nature of this experience. One student reflected:

Ever since [the TalkBack Classroom] ... I decided to be a journalist, because I was really passionate about the whole interviewing experience, and it was a whole lot of fun, and I just enjoyed it. I'd do it again tomorrow if I could. (Kloe Croker)

For those in the audience, the learning experience was reduced to a more passive/receptive role, and was more relevant and intelligible to those in secondary school. Nonetheless, numerous students lined up to ask a question at the end of the interview.



Students interviewing Hon. John Anderson as part of the Murray-Darling Basin TalkBack Classroom, held in the main tent at the Riverhealth Conference, Mildura 2004.
[Photos: courtesy Firestarter Communications]

PROJECT 19

Project Name: *Custodian's Welcome*
Institution: Melbourne's Living Museum of the West

A community-led participatory project

In June 2003 a group of the Wurundjeri people from Melbourne welcomed a group of newly arrived migrants, the Karen people of Burma, to 'the land' at Pipemakers Park in the City of Maribyrnong in a ceremony called "Custodian's Welcome". The project aimed to address: "the more subtle issues of 'settlement' for new migrants with a sense of place, a sense of land and a sharing of spiritual values between the local Aboriginal community and representatives of a newly arrived group of migrants. The project also aimed to introduce new migrants to an awareness of the original inhabitants of the land as early as possible in their settlement" (Living Museum of the West, 2005: website).

This event and engagement between the two groups was preceded by numerous discussions and meetings between the elders of each group to establish trust and understanding. Aboriginal consultant, Reg Blow, noted:

"The Karen people hold the Aboriginal people of this land in the highest regard. I believe that the Karen want the approval of the Aboriginal people for the Karen to live on Aboriginal land" Living Museum of the West, 2005: website).

Living Museum of the West's preparedness to use their facilities and resources to help deliver this type of cultural engagement promotes a new kind of participation for museums. The museum responded to a community-led project; its staff worked collaboratively with members of the Aboriginal community, the Inner West Migrant Resource Centre and Maribyrnong City Council to ensure its successful delivery.



New migrants from Burma participate in a welcome ceremony led by the local Aboriginal community at Pipemakers Park, near the Living Museum of the West.

[Image courtesy: Living Museum of the West website]

Appendix H: Basin Bytes Fact Sheet

COMMITTING TO PLACE: BASIN BYTES: FACT SHEET

6/6/03

Overview

1. Background to the NMA

The National Museum of Australia tells the story of **Land, Nation and People** through its 5 permanent exhibitions:

- a) Nation:** explores Australian history through the lens of national symbols; both official symbols and popular cultural symbols.
- b) Tangled Destinies:** explores the relationship between people and the land, how people have responded to the Australian environment over thousands of years.
- c) Horizons:** reveals the human face of one of the world's most remarkable migration stories, exploring the legacy of the connections to places beyond our shores by historical, religious and cultural ties and the complex and changing meaning of 'home'.
- d) Eternity:** is devoted to the passion, drama and emotion of real life bringing together the story of 50 extraordinary people presented through 10 themes: mystery, separation, hope, passion, fear, chance, loneliness, joy, thrill, devotion.
- e) Gallery of First Australians:** explores through community voice and perspective ABTSI cultures and histories, their attachment to land, sea, sky and the history of contact with other cultures.

Committing to Place: Background

Primarily, "Committing to Place" investigates the application of communication technologies for increasing community commitment to natural resource management and cultural heritage.

The NMA aims to pilot a number of communications projects, in a range of community settings, and a research team will evaluate their impact, specifically for community capacity building and developing platforms for change.

Partners in this project include the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research, the University of Tasmania, the Murray Darling Basin Commission and other local government and NGO's.

'Basin Bytes' is Public Program's 'contribution' to the overall suite of communication projects being developed by the NMA and its partners.

2. Project Summary

A group of young people (9-12 participants, 12-25yrs) will be invited to participate in the project by initially choosing one of the 10 themes from our **Eternity Gallery**. They will then be asked to 'apply' the chosen theme to some aspect in their local community that is of particular interest them (be it a story, place, object, person etc). Participants will then build a collection of digital images and supporting materials to present their interpretation of their chosen theme.

These images and supporting materials will be managed and uploaded by the participants onto the NMA's website in an identified Echuca: Basin Bytes 'gallery' space.

Participants will be facilitated through 3 phases; gathering of information (images), interpretation of information (selection and addition of text) and presentation (uploading onto the website). We hope that the launch of the Echuca: Basin Bytes gallery on the

NMA website will be accompanied by a physical exhibition in the Echuca local community to celebrate the project and those who participated.

Central to this project is the evaluation by the research team of the outcomes of the process and its effectiveness in supporting sustainable community contributions to natural resource and cultural heritage management. Members of the research team will periodically act as unobtrusive observers.

3. Project Management

Basin Bytes is the first project within the 'Committing to Place' program managed by the National Museum's public program's team. The intention is to invite other communities along the Murray Darling Basin to participate in similar projects and build a web-based gallery of stories, digital images and visual narratives that represent the cultural heritage of local communities from the perspective of young people.

At a local level we are hoping to contract experienced CCD practitioners to facilitate the project. These facilitators would be required to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the project
- Be available to visit the National Museum of Australia in Canberra for a two day orientation.
- Be experienced in delivering similar projects
- Show an understanding of CCD principles
- Be able to communicate effectively with a group of young people
- Are creative and dynamic
- Have some experience with the use of new technologies

The tasks a facilitator will have to undertake are:

- Implement the project to meet the project's stated objectives
- Identify and select a group of young people to participate in the project
- Manage the young people through the process using effective consultation and communication skills
- Develop a workshop program within the timeframe
- Liaise with the National Museum of Australia regularly as required
- Develop skills in the use of digital photography and the uploading of images and text onto the Museum website.

4. Funding

This project will be funded and managed through the National Museum of Australia. However, we are seeking administration support from local organisations to:

- identify potential facilitators
- participate in the selection process of a facilitator
- seek a venue for the workshops for the young people
- seek access to a computer in order for the young people to upload the final images and text
- consider finding local support for a physical public exhibition / launch of the final work in the local community
- provide general support to the facilitator as needed.

5. Contacts

Adam Blackshaw
Public Programs Coordinator
National Museum of Australia
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Canberra ACT, 2601
p.(02) 6208 5230
f. (02) 6208 5148
a.blackshaw@nma.gov.au; www.nma.gov.au

Appendix I: Basin Bytes Stakeholder Goals (Wills, 2004: 18-19)

6.2 Stakeholder goals

The project and associated stakeholders have complementary and competing goals for the projects. Those goals that relate to specific sections of each *Basin Bytes* Project will be addressed in Part 2 of the individual project sections. More general goals will be addressed in Part 3 Conclusions and recommendations.

Key stakeholders

General NMA

- *For the museum to explore ways of conducting outreach activities using ICT tools and which incorporate the capacity of digital collecting to enhance the NMA collection.*
- *To produce online community generated content for the NMA website and enhance community relationships (Document~ W:\ICT\ICT Projects 2002-2003\Murray-Darling Basin Project\Reporting\AR – Murray-Darling Project –NMA briefing – 2002-10-17).*

Public Programs, NMA

- *To develop a model for NMA outreach projects.*
- *To assess the effectiveness of outreach programs specifically using ICTs.*
- *To stimulate appreciation of local history, places and the environment among young people in the MDB.*
- *To showcase the creative abilities and perspective of young people through the NMA's website (Document~ Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project Report to Committing to Place Overseeing Committee, 10 April 2003).*
- *To integrate a CCD approach to developing museum activities.*
- *To recognise social shifts and transformations within a participant group (Document~ Basin Bytes AB 01.05.2003)*

ICT, NMA

- *To develop a capacity to support community driven digital collecting and exhibition activities (Document~ Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project Report to Committing to Place Overseeing Committee, 10 April 2003).*

Committing to Place Research Team

- *To assess the effectiveness of this model for engaging communities in online collecting and exhibition activities.*
- *To assess the effectiveness of this model to engage and support community driven contributions to natural resource and cultural heritage management (Document~ Murray-Darling Basin Outreach Project Report to Committing to Place Overseeing Committee, 10 April 2003).*

Local facilitator Echuca

- *For participants to gain confidence and experience and a sense that they are not restricted by living in a regional area.*

- *To provide the NMA with an exciting project that extends the boundaries of their original concept and which inspires them to repeat the project with other communities (Document~ Basin Bytes PG 07.08.2003).*

Local facilitator Wentworth

- *To involve participants in the local area, extend their horizon to interact with the local environment*
- *To install in participants a level of self belief*
- *To explore artistic responses to NRM issues (Document~ Basin Bytes KF Interview 1 03.02.2004).*

Participants

Participants' goals varied but included the following areas:

- To develop an understanding of equipment and the web
- To develop a sense of pride via participating in a project run by the NMA
- To explore their sense of place and local environment
- To complete a project assigned to them by their teacher or parent
- To explore artistic dimensions of NRM
- To inspire others in their understanding of their surrounds and cultural heritage
- To develop material that would complement projects they were working on in a similar thematic area

Other stakeholders

A number of other stakeholders also identified specific project goals.

Arts and Cultural Development Officer, Campaspe Shire Council

- Creating a virtual gallery for the community
- Being a space where a range of issues, including controversial issues, can be explored. (Document~Basin Bytes JW Audio Journal, 3 December 2003)

Regional Arts Development Officer, West Darling Arts

- To run the project at the same time as the Sweat Box Art Competition, which also addresses material culture and NRM issues
- To ensure participants stay involved and get something out of it
- To reflect on its success and try and implement the project in other towns in the Far West Region, particularly along the Darling River (Document~ BBW James Giddey Interview 1 03/02/2004).

Appendix J: Questions for Taped Audio Journals

Basin Bytes Wentworth: Taped Journals

We are interested in finding out what people like and don't like about being involved in the Basin Bytes project.

We would like you to keep a taped journal of your experiences working on this project. This could help you keep track of your thoughts as you take pictures and develop a story to go with them. It can also be used to tell us what part of the project you like or don't like as you move through the different stages of the project. Or you could use it to make suggestions for improvements. It's up to you how you use it.

At the end of the project, I will collect the tapes and tape recorders and transcribe the material.

Questions to think about each time you use the tape recorders:

1. What have you been doing on the project this week?
2. Are you enjoying it? Why or why not?
3. Do you understand what you are being asked to do?
4. Have you seen any of the other participants during the week and talked about what they're doing?
5. Have you told anyone else about what you're doing? What do they think about it and would they like to be involved too?
6. Is the equipment (cameras, database etc) working ok?
7. Does taking pictures or writing stories about the lagoon make you feel differently about it?
8. Any other comments you would like to make?

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0409539377

Appendix K: 'Postcards from the Basin'

Evaluation 'postcard' from Echuca

Postcards from the Basin: Echuca

Back on the road again. Am now winding my way through the parched landscapes of central Victoria. Struck by the beauty of red gums, the fragility of pastures that are crying out for rain, and an alarming quantity of roadkill... I am heading for Echuca.

Nestled between the Murray and Campaspe rivers, Echuca is well known for its paddle steamers and the floodplains along the river. Not so well known however, is role as the birthplace for the NMA's Basin Bytes program which is almost ready to go live online...



Bytes, camera... technicalities...

It's 31st March 2004, the middle of Youth Week. We are gathered in the Tower Room in the bowels of the Shire of Campaspe offices, equipped with computers, a selection of framed pictures from the project and a tempting plate of food.

Paul Gamble, Echuca's Basin Bytes facilitator, breathes heavily and folds his arms. The project appears not to be online yet. There are 15 minutes before the speeches. Feelings of mild alarm...

Luckily, though, I'd seen the site earlier in the day and knew it just had to be there. The site is up... just not linked to the main page yet. It's an easy fix though and we set the computers to the relevant pages. Sighs of relief all round.



Lift off!

www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/echuca_basin_bytes/

Basin Bytes Echuca is officially launched by Campaspe Shire Councillor Peter Williams, NMA's Dennis Sheppard and Paul Gamble. Thanks for all, accolades and certificates for the bytees.

Sadly, not all participants are in attendance. But this local launch of the project is important. It recognises the efforts of the bytees, is a milestone for Paul, and grounds the project in the local community. And it's a chance for publicity. A photographer from the local paper arranges participants into a winning pose...

Curious council workers slip into room to find out more. Art teacher Norm Wright and the principle from the Secondary College arrive. Max from the High School also drops by. Bytees Louann, Maxine, Kylie and Eloise glance anxiously at the computers, eager to see their work, unsure of how it will look.



'Not what I expected...'

(Maxine Vale)

There is a rush on the computers and on first viewing people appear to be excited. I corner Maxine, bytee and author of the Picola story, and discover the site doesn't look quite like she imagined. She is pleasantly surprised though, and pleased that she has her own page. She'd thought her photos would be part of a larger, less personal gallery.

Maxine's mum reflects that the project made the whole family see their surroundings in a different light. Maxine had to think laterally about the story she wanted to tell and how she wanted to communicate her sense of place to viewers worldwide. Research and family input has paid off and, with the project now online, there are smiles all round.



Waving the flag for Youth Week and Committing to Place!

Echuca has a Youth Week flag which is accompanying council workers to every event for signing by participants. This year, coinciding with Basin Bytes are two other Youth Week activities. A debate in Kyabram about activities for young people in the region and a short film festival at Echuca's new Paramount Cinemas.

Flag bearer for the council, Aubery Schwarz, is pleased to hear about the Committing to Place team's work on program evaluation. He notes that feedback is an essential component of community development projects, but often overlooked. He is excited that this kind of research on Basin Bytes was underway.



Portrait of a community artist

Paul Gamble is this project's unassuming hero. As he hands out certificates he receives one from Dennis in turn. It should have been written in gold!

It's difficult not to overestimate the time and energy it takes to get community based projects up and running. Paul has jumped hurdles, tall buildings and paddle steamers to get this project ready. Distance communications, limited time with the bytes and technical challenges all seemed to conspire against him from the outset. Yet despite these frustrations, he persisted.

This determination has paid off, and today is as much his day as any ones. Yet Paul is nonchalant about this achievement. Partner Louann notes wryly that it will sink in at home or when he starts work again at midnight - he's got multiple jobs on the go.



Farewell Echuca

Spend the morning in Echuca struggling to download images from the launch. Now I know what Paul was talking about!

Drop by the Gamble residence for a cup of tea and one final interview. Get the low down on the launch and a philosophical appraisal of the project from both Paul and Louann's eyes. Paul notes he'd like to do the project -as a participant. Blurring the role of participant and facilitator was hard because he couldn't concentrate on his images.

Would he do it again? There are no rose coloured glasses here, but Paul reflects that he would... with some fine tuning, of course. And discover he met someone at the launch who wanted to him to run Basin Bytes in their town! In the meantime, Basin Bytes lives on online...



Acknowledgements

Written by Jo Wills, University of Tasmania, during fieldwork as part of her PhD research and the Committing to Place Project.

Project photographs: All images of Echuca by Basin Bytes Echuca participants.

Banner: black and white banner design by Paul Gamble, Basin Bytes Echuca Facilitator.

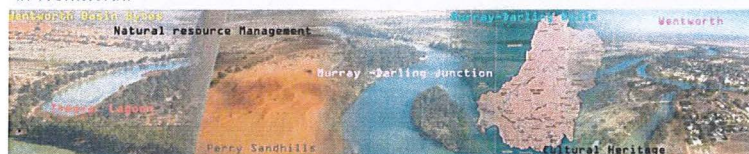
Launch photographs: All photos from the launch by Jo Wills.

Evaluation 'postcard' from Wentworth, NSW

Basin Bytes Wentworth

In October 2003, Ruth, Frank and I met James Giddey at a conference in Broken Hill and talked about the possibility of running a Basin Bytes project in Wentworth. His subsequent discussions with Adam led to Kim Field being employed as the local facilitator and the project beginning in February 2004. Now, after 4 months of planning, discussing, visualising, story telling and evaluating, the Wentworth Basin Bytes project is finally finished.

It's June 25th 2004. Adam Blackshaw and I have made our way through the Mildura Balloon Festival masses to Wentworth for the local opening and online launch of Basin Bytes. Coinciding with the Wentworth Art Prize, the Sweat Box Art Competition and the Dip Tin Art Competition, Basin Bytes is part of a week of arts-based activities and events in Wentworth.



The local exhibition

We arrive at the Wentworth Visitor Centre to find Jade, Jenny, Carmel and Kim busy considering how best to install the framed or mounted Basin Bytes images and integrate them with artworks from the Dip Tin Competition which shares the space.

Before we arrived, Lee, Sarah, Maria, Jenny and Amy had either dropped off their images or made sure Kim had them to install. Maggie is bringing her images in on Saturday. There is a keen sense of aesthetics and pride in the display. How to hang them, mount them, stagger them on the wall? Each casts a critical eye over the the whole display, and help manoeuvre dip tins around the centre.

Kim's laptop sits on a wooden table underneath framed explanatory text and a framed copy of the website banner. Kim is ready to show the website to all those interested in seeing the online gallery.



The website

www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/community/wentworth_basin_bytes

From uploading images to the database to the final 'bytes' on the website, each participant has had a vision and story in mind. But they all felt the website needed to be more interactive. Could it, mused James, include instruction materials and guidelines rather than be just a showcase for the end product?

At the time of the first workshop, the Echuca project not online, nor was the database accessible for viewing. Participants expressed a need to know 'exactly what it looked like on the website...' from the beginning. Also, explaining the integration between the database and the website gallery needs to be addressed for the next BB project. Could participants be more engaged with the process of creating the website? For one participant felt this detachment contributed to one of her images being displayed incorrectly.



'linking Wentworth with the world'

For at least 3 of the participants, the web has given them the chance to talk to a wide audience, both within and beyond Australia. This has led them to consider questions of historical accuracy, aesthetics, story structure and local identity.



In the final workshop, Jade remarked: 'One of my friends... works for Sydney Water... she's just itching for it to be up so she can log on and have a look...'



Maggie was excited that audiences would get to see the other's images 'I'm just looking forward to having my work and the other people's work because, oh, some of the people have got such wonderful arty photographer eyes ... I think the website's going to be just fabulous...'

And Sarah brought her grandma into the Visitor Centre to show her the website, her first foray into the internet.

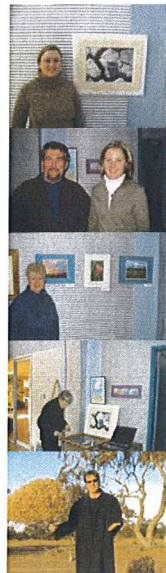


From little things...

Photographs and dip tins installed, Adam and I leave Kim at the Visitor Centre and head off with James to see the entries in this year's Wentworth Art and Sweat Box Competitions. Waste to art, local engagement, artistic expression: art entered into these shows is imaginative and playful, reflective and bold.

Prominent amongst the paintings in the town hall is an aerial landscape painting by one of the bytes, Jade Temby. Drawing on a photograph she took for Basin Bytes when she and Kim hired a local Cessna plane to capture aerial shots for the website, Jade has captured elements in the local landscape: Thegoa Lagoon, Perry Sandhills and Wentworth famous position at the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers.

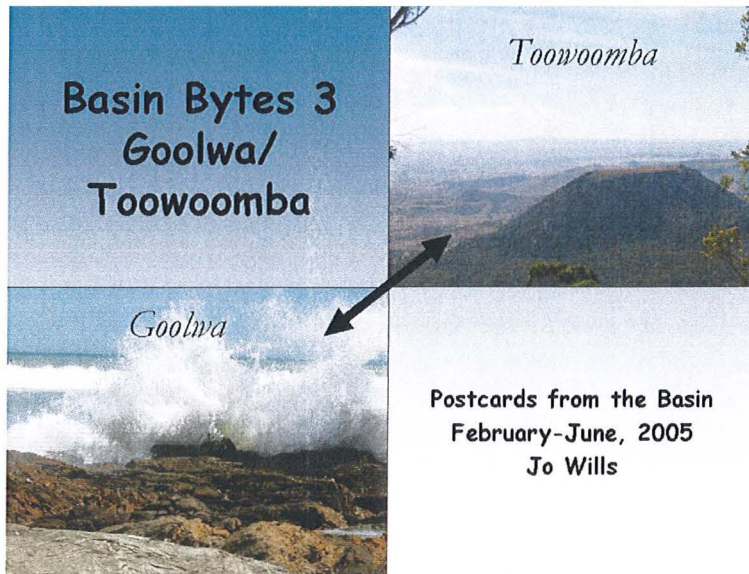
Later that evening at the launch, Jade's image is pronounced winner of the Open Art prize. Congratulations, celebrations and wine all round...



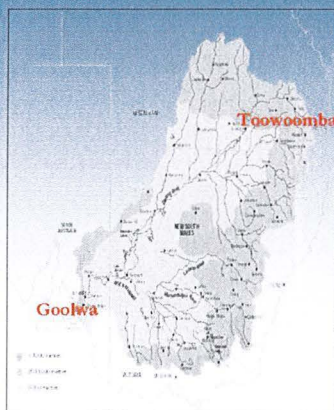
Acknowledgements

- All images used in this presentation have either been produced by Basin Bytes Wentworth participants, are available on the NMA Basin Bytes website or were taken by Jo Wills.
- Special mention to facilitator Kim Field and Regional Arts Worker James Giddey for assisting with research and making this an enjoyable project to evaluate.
- Congratulations to all the project participants for their enthusiasm and endeavours.
- Thanks to Carmel from Wentworth Visitor Centre where workshops were held and photographs displayed.
- Final shout out to NMA project developer, Adam Blackshaw, for his enduring sense of humour and sprint through the Perry Sandhills.

Evaluation 'postcard' from Goolwa-Toowoomba



At either end of the Basin...



communities are facing a range of land & water management issues. The 3rd Basin Bytes project sought to link 2 geographically distant communities using photographic stories to discuss these issues.

As evaluator, I took to the road yet again & made extended journeys to meet the participants in both communities & review the projects progress. This time, however, as I travelled through the vineyards of the McLaren Vale to reach Goolwa at the mouth of the Murray River & ascend the escarpment to Toowoomba in the Darling Downs, I was not alone.

Stakeholders in the field

First stop: Goolwa, South Australia. Adam Blackshaw & Matthew Higgins (NMA), the 2 facilitators James McKee & David Cooney & Alison Reid (MDBC) joined me in the field. One recommendation from the evaluation of the previous project was for staff presence in the field. This sends a message of project purpose & authority to participants, & has the added bonus of strengthening social relationships & learning opportunities.



A thematic approach: Goolwa

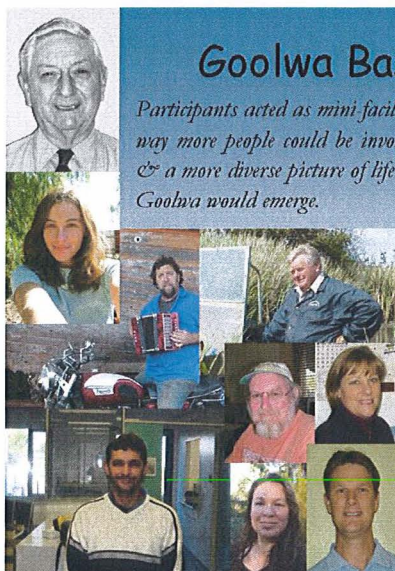
When Goolwa facilitator, David Cooney, first visited the NMA in December 2004, he believed one way of connecting participants from different communities in the project was via themes. He selected participants for the Goolwa Basin Bytes on the basis of 8 predetermined themes:

- Youth
- Indigenous land use
- Memories of older people
- Environment & conservation
- Industry – irrigation
- Industry – fishing
- History/ heritage
- RAMSAR wetlands



Goolwa Basin Bytes

Participants acted as mini-facilitators for each of the project themes. This way more people could be involved in the project, more stories explored, & a more diverse picture of life at the coastal end of the Murray River in Goolwa would emerge.



- Frank:** history & heritage
- Belinda:** youth & environment
- David:** local community & lifestyle
- Henry & Gloria:** fishing family
- Richard:** environment & conservation
- Cassie:** memories & older residents
- Grant:** indigenous life
- Kerrie:** irrigation farming
- Tim:** Ramsar wetlands

The initial Goolwa workshop

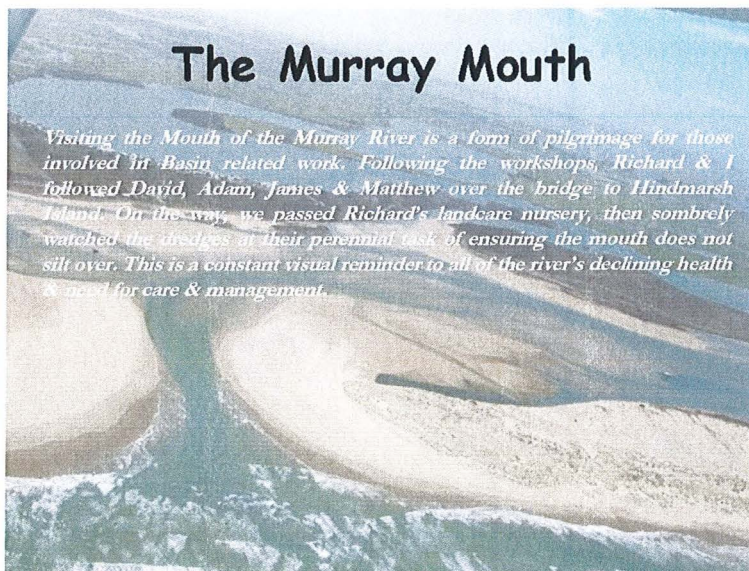
The first workshop at Goolwa included presentations by the NMA & the MDBC. This provided good context & concrete examples of previous projects, stories & images. The evaluation role became a more observatory & reflective one: I watched with interest as recommendations were implemented via staff presence & discussion of curatorial issues.

Not all participants could make the workshop, & those that did attended having been specifically asked. Some were wary of the cameras at first, and about the evaluation audio journals. Most accepted the recorders after explanation, however, & cameras were soon seen to be easy to use after demonstration and discussion.



The Murray Mouth

Visiting the Mouth of the Murray River is a form of pilgrimage for those involved in Basin related work. Following the workshops, Richard & I followed David, Adam, James & Matthew over the bridge to Hindmarsh Island. On the way, we passed Richard's landcare nursery, then sombrely watched the tidesges at their perennial task of ensuring the mouth does not silt over. This is a constant visual reminder to all of the river's declining health & need for care & management.

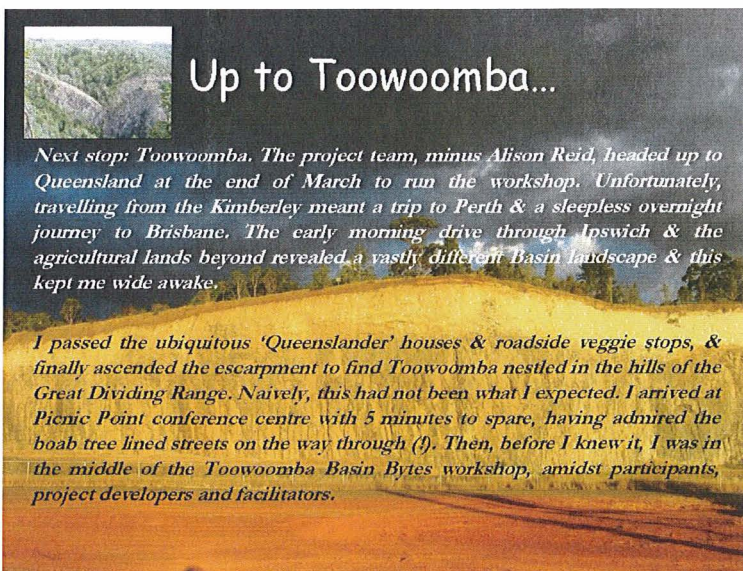


Up to Toowoomba...



Next stop: Toowoomba. The project team, minus Alison Reid, headed up to Queensland at the end of March to run the workshop. Unfortunately, travelling from the Kimberley meant a trip to Perth & a sleepless overnight journey to Brisbane. The early morning drive through Ipswich & the agricultural lands beyond revealed a vastly different Basin landscape & this kept me wide awake.

I passed the ubiquitous 'Queenslander' houses & roadside veggie stops, & finally ascended the escarpment to find Toowoomba nestled in the hills of the Great Dividing Range. Naively, this had not been what I expected. I arrived at Picnic Point conference centre with 5 minutes to spare, having admired the boob tree lined streets on the way through (!). Then, before I knew it, I was in the middle of the Toowoomba Basin Bytes workshop, amidst participants, project developers and facilitators.



A community of interest: Toowoomba

In contrast to coastal Goolwa, Toowoomba's status as the regional capital of Queensland's Darling Downs meant the two communities were destined to articulate the project differently. Instead of the local shire NRM officer, Toowoomba Landcare Group (TLG) undertook to deliver Basin Bytes. Work commitments meant facilitator Marian Stark was unable to commit fulltime to the project. TLG Chair, James McKee, thus decided to share the facilitation role with Marian.

As Toowoomba's population is in excess of 90,000, TLG focussed the project less on a community of place & more on one of interest. With the slogan, 'Getting your hands dirty', & an interest in developing partnerships, TLG hoped to use Basin Bytes to inspire new & existing members to sustain their interest in NRM activities via this visual storytelling medium.

The Toowoomba participants


Like Goolwa, the Toowoomba facilitators handpicked project participants. During the round table introductions, participants expressed their interest in Basin & the project:

- **Rodney:** a farmer from Crows Nest with 15 years in the Murray Darling Basin
- **Corrie:** a regional indigenous facilitator with the Condamine Catchment
- **Rick:** Crows Nest Shire councillor who has swapped his interest from coastcare to landcare
- **Grant:** an army pilot with a passion for family farming
- **Mary:** a local with little knowledge of landcare, & her husband -
- **Mark:** like Mary, little NRM, but noted the presence of Murray Cod at the top end of the river
- **Zane:** a local with interest in the creative nature of the project & internet
- **Paula:** Darling downs farmer, landcare seed propagator, interested in projects potential to bring people together
- **Sarah:** Local photographer with a passion for the Basin environment (absent)

'Thinking Basin, acting locally'

Following introductions, James & Marian discuss the types of projects TLG usually work on. The workshop was designed to be a full morning event in the middle of the week, timing that is different to the nature of the weekend workshops held for the Wentworth Basin Bytes meetings.

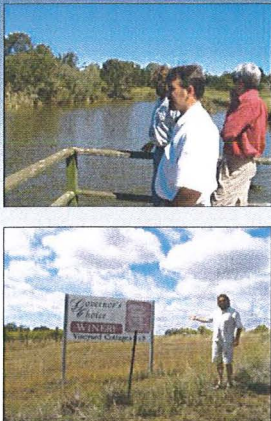
David Cooney gave an overview of the project from Goolwa's perspective, noting that residents at the bottom of the Basin are often quick to accuse those at the top of poor management. Having images of Goolwa for the participants to get a visual perspective of the landscape could have helped emphasis this point. Similarly, images of Toowoomba would have given Goolwa participants more visual connection to their counterparts.



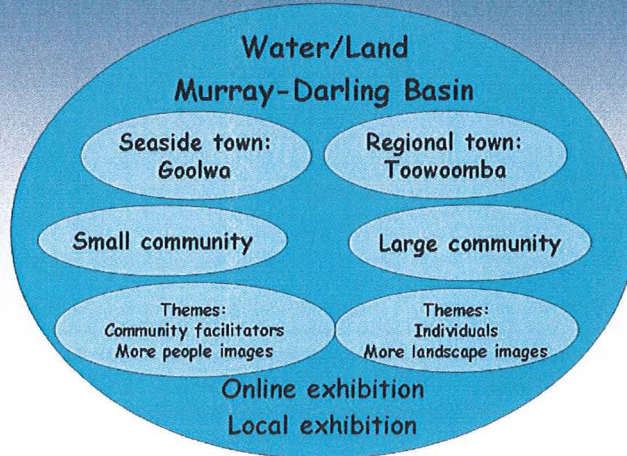
Exploring the landscape

After the workshop, James took the project team to a number of NRM sites around Toowoomba. Urban wetlands & regional gardens & NRM activities was in contrast to the irrigation & coastal issues around Goolwa. Further interaction on this social level meant that different aspects of the project could be discussed informally over a beer at local Toowoomba pub The Spotted Cow!

The following day, David & I drove out of town to get another sense of the landscape & idea of the farming activities in the area. Cattle & crops were in abundance, & we discovered a winery down a dirt road – a small connection to the agricultural activity in the Goolwa region!



Basin Bytes Goolwa/Toowoomba: 2 communities, different dimensions



'Being there': the importance of fieldwork



Project developers and facilitators alike valued the chance for face-to-face interaction with each other and the participants during the initial workshops.

Adam Blackshaw, NMA

'we've been able to take on board ... some of the recommendations from the previous two projects Things like the need for the museum to be more visible ... That has personally been really good because I've been more on top of it & more engaged. I've got to know people more & it's just a more enjoyable project to do'.

David Cooney, Goolwa

'It set a scene & it also brought up to the surface the fact that it was a project not just being done locally by the participants, but that it fitted into a bigger program. I think having Alison from the MD&C there was really good to show the links there'.



'Being there': the importance of fieldwork



One participant in Toowoomba noted it was significant that staff had actually ventured into the field rather than issuing an instruction & sending out materials from the city. Project developers and facilitators have shared this enthusiasm:

Matthew Higgins, NMA

I think it was vitally important for us to go in person because it was stated openly in Toowoomba that they were really pleased to see people from the NMA there ... that this hadn't come magically out of the sky, that we were there in person & weren't trying to impose something on them ... you can't do it remotely'.

James McKee, Toowoomba

'if we hadn't had that face-to-face meeting there wouldn't have been the momentum there is now'.



Connecting Communities

Face-to-face contact via workshops & meetings helped get the project underway within both Goolwa & Toowoomba, however, communication between communities was minimal. This is partly due to the geographic distance, but also reflects the volunteer nature of the project, communication costs & well as the impersonal nature of the online "Yahoo" chat room Adam began early 2005.

James noted that asking participants to purpose call Goolwa participants was part of their plan – a sort of interim segment of the project. How this interaction is documented remains uncertain:

'My feeling is that once the database is up, & especially as we've linked by themes not just by location, there will be an interest because people will want to go and see their own photos there and will look at other people with a common theme or interest. I think at that stage, lights will go on for some of those people, once it's up there.'



Connecting Communities 2

From an intra-community perspective, David tried to run subsequent workshops in Goolwa, but was disappointed by attendance rates & the sense of lost learning opportunity:

'the workshop where we had 4 people we had a fair bit of ... people quizzing each other, looking at each others work & making suggestions. You could see it happening there & it would have been good to get everybody in one spot at one time.'

At another level, James has been able to discuss the project with the broader NRM community, discussions that have provoked both interest & surprise:

There are a whole range of people that I've spoken to who have thought it was a fantastic idea & ... there is a growing interest in the impacts, upstream & downstream of our actions, & a growing awareness. Most of the people I spoke to from both industry & conservation saw this as a really interesting way of getting people's perspectives on what's happening upstream & downstream & not just what they hear in the media. So there was a general feeling that it was a useful & interesting process.'

Connecting interests

The thematic approach was a good way of combining the interests & concerns of two communities within the same region. As with the other Basin Bytes projects, the use of photography & storytelling were also important ways to share information about local place & community. A number of Toowoomba participants had been involved in successful photo elicitation projects before

This backed up Adam's notion that photography is a universal tool for engaging participants in community projects:

'Anybody can take 30 photographs and one of them will be worthy of a calendar. So it's a good one to choose. I think the product itself is actually pretty good. Some of the images themselves are extraordinary.'

Extending presentation: redeveloping the website

At an interim project meeting in Canberra, David, James, Matthew, Adam & Jo discussed the design of the website for the 3rd Basin Bytes project. Although Adam noted that the website had caused a degree of frustration & restricted his vision for community generated creative development, working with two communities still gave it the potential to be more dynamic & engaging.

Reflections from the evaluation of the Pass the Salt website underpinned the need for clear geographic indicators. As the team workshopped the presentation of the projects additional thematic dimensions, Adam discussed the use of an interactive map as an entry point to Basin projects, which has the additional use as an orientation tool.

Interim recommendations

- Continue sending NMA staff to outreach community workshops, including curators.
- Integrate evaluative process into future projects to help keep track of project development.
- Provide more material on the database help pages to clearly delineate curatorial fields – description, story, title, theme.
- Promote a mid project workshop or interim site that encourages/enables participants to explore work developed by partner communities.
- Investigate different ways to bring communities together via communications technology.
- Initiate a clear sense of geographic locality for the project on the website.
- Explore the possibility of working with 2 communities in closer proximity to facilitate greater face-to-face communication.
- Explore the possibility of using audio/ audiovisual on the website for future projects.
- Consider bringing Basin Bytes facilitators together in a community of interest.
- Promote the project methodology to facilitate industry learning & development.
- Explore the possibility of a publication that explores the dimensions of the NMA's Murray-Darling Basin outreach projects.

Acknowledgements

- *All images used in this presentation have either been produced by Basin Bytes Goolwa/Toowoomba participants or were taken by Jo Wills during fieldwork.*
- *Special mention to facilitators David Cooney, Marian Stark & James McKee for assisting with research & injecting this project with lots of fun & enthusiasm.*
- *Appreciation in advance to the participants for their time & patience during the workshops & for helping with the evaluation.*
- *Thanks to Adam Blackshaw & Matthew Higgins from the NMA for support & good humour, & making trips to Toowoomba & Canberra possible.*

NB: this is an interim review of the projects' progress. Audio journals from participants still in use.

